

Riverside Edition

THE POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS
OF ROBERT BROWNING

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOLUME II.



DRAMATIC LYRICS: THE RETURN
OF THE DRUSES: A BLOT IN THE
'SCUTCHEON: COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY
DRAMATIC ROMANCES: A SOUL'S
TRAGEDY: LURIA

BY

ROBERT BROWNING



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DRAMATIC LYRICS

IN a late edition were collected and redistributed the pieces first published in 1842, 1845, and 1855, respectively, under the titles of "Dramatic Lyrics," "Dramatic Romances," and "Men and Women." It is not worth while to disturb this arrangement.

Such Poems as the majority in this volume might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces," being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine

Part of the Poems were inscribed to my dear friend John Kenyon; I hope the whole may obtain the honor of an association with his memory.

R. B.

CAVALIER TUNES.

I. MARCHING ALONG.

I.

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you 're —

CHORUS. — Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

III.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell.
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,

CHORUS. — Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

IV.

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his snarls
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles !
 Hold by the right, you double your might ;
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHORUS. — March we along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !

II. GIVE A ROUSE.

I.

King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
 Give a rouse : here 's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles !

II.

Who gave me the goods that went since ?
 Who raised me the house that sank once ?
 Who helped me to gold I spent since ?
 Who found me in wine you drank once ?

CHORUS. — King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
 Give a rouse : here 's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles !

III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
 By the old fool's side that begot him ?
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him ?

CHORUS. — King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
 Give a rouse : here 's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles !

III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

I.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !
 Rescue my castle before the hot day

Brightens to blue from its silvery gray.

CHORUS. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !

II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you 'd say ;

Many's the friend there, will listen and pray,

" God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —

CHORUS. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "

III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,

Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array :

Who laughs, " Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHORUS. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "

IV.

Who? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,

Laughs when you talk of surrendering, " Nay !

I've better counsellors ; what counsel they ?

CHORUS. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,

Just for a riband to stick in his coat —

Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,

Lost all the others, she lets us devote ;

They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,

So much was theirs who so little allowed :

How all our copper had gone for his service !

Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud !

We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,

Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,

Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,

Made him our pattern to live and to die !

Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,

Burns, Shelley, were with us, — they watch from their graves !

He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,

He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

II.

We shall march prospering, — not through his presence ;

Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre ;

Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
 Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
 Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again !
 Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his own ;
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.”

[16—.]

I.

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
 I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;
 “ Good speed ! ” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew ;
 “ Speed ! ” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;
 Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
 And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace
 Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place ;
 I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
 Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

’T was moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
 Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
 At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;
 At Duffeld, ’t was morning as plain as could be ;
 And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half chime,
 So, Joris broke silence with, “ Yet there is time ! ”

IV.

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
And one eye's black intelligence, — ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, " Stay spar !
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's not in her,
We 'll remember at Aix " — for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff ;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And " Gallop," gasped Joris, " for Aix is in sight ! "

VIII.

" How they 'll greet us ! " — and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;

Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR.

1842.

I.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried,
As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride ?
Or are witnesses denied —
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride ?

III.

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied ?)
To reside — where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,
 Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
 Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
 As I ride, as I ride,
 Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
 — Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed —
 How has vied stride with stride
 As I ride, as I ride !

V.

As I ride, as I ride,
 Could I loose what Fate has tied,
 Ere I pried, she should hide
 (As I ride, as I ride)
 All that's meant me — satisfied
 When the Prophet and the Bride
 Stop veins I'd have subside
 As I ride, as I ride !

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS.

I.

My heart sank with our Claret-flask,
 Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
 That serve this pond's black face for mask ;
 And still at yonder broken edges
 O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
 After my heart I look and listen.

II.

Our laughing little flask, compelled
 Through depth to depth more bleak and shady ;
 As when, both arms beside her held,
 Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
 Is caught up from life's light and motion,
 And dropped into death's silent ocean !

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
 Like a pygmy castle-warder,
 Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
 Arms and accoutrements all in order ;
 And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling South,
 Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,

Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
 Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
 Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
 Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
 And then, with an impudence nought could abash,
 Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the beholder,
 For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder :
 And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
 And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
 Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting !

HERE'S to Nelson's memory !
 'Tis the second time that I, at sea,
 Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
 Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
 Nelson forever — any time
 Am I his to command in prose or rhyme !
 Give me of Nelson only a touch,
 And I save it, be it little or much :
 Here's one our Captain gives, and so
 Down at the word, by George, shall it go !
 He says that at Greenwich they point the beholder
 To Nelson's coat, " still with tar on the shoulder,
 For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
 Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging
 Up against the mizzen-rigging ! "

GARDEN FANCIES.

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME.

I.

Here's the garden she walked across,
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since :
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !
 She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
 She went while her robe's edge brushed the box :

And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you, noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

III.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name:
What a name! Was it love or praise?
Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

V.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved forever!
Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle —
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!
— Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces —
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

I.

Plague take all your pedants, say I !
 He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
 Centuries back was so good as to die,
 Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;
 This, that was a book in its time,
 Printed on paper and bound in leather,
 Last month in the white of a matin-prime,
 Just when the birds sang all together,

II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
 And under the arbute and laurustine
 Read it, so help me grace in my need,
 From title-page to closing line.
 Chapter on chapter did I count,
 As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;
 Added up the mortal amount ;
 And then proceeded to my revenge.

III.

Yonder 's a plum-tree with a crevice
 An owl would build in, were he but sage ;
 For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
 In a castle of the middle age,
 Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
 When he 'd be private, there might he spend
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber :
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
 — At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate ;
 Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;
 Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
 And gum that locked our friend in limbo,

A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo :
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis*,
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake ;
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glisten
O'er the page so beautifully yellow :
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks !
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow ?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six !

VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trove ?
— When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet ?

VIII.

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,
And clasps were cracking and covers suppling !
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

IX.

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough is it ?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
Good-bye, mother-beetle ; husband-eft, *sufficit!*
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf !
A's book shall prop you up, B's shall cover you,
Here's C to be grave with, or D to be gay,
And with E on each side, and F right over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER.

I.

Gr-r-r — there go, my heart's abhorrence !
 Water your damned flower-pots, do !
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
 God's blood, would not mine kill you !
 What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
 Oh, that rose has prior claims —
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
 Hell dry you up with its flames !

II.

At the meal we sit together :
Salve tibi ! I must hear
 Wise talk of the kind of weather,
 Sort of season, time of year :
Not a plenteous cork-crop : scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt :
What's the Latin name for "parsley" ?
 What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout ?

III.

Whew ! We'll have our platter burnished,
 Laid with care on our own shelf !
 With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
 And a goblet for ourself,
 Rinsed like something sacrificial
 Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps —
 Marked with L for our initial !
 (He-he ! There his lily snaps !)

IV.

Saint, forsooth ! While brown Dolores
 Squats outside the Convent bank
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,
 Steeping tresses in the tank,
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs
 — Can't I see his dead eye glow,
 Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's ?
 (That is, if he'd let it show !)

V.

When he finishes refection,
 Knife and fork he never lays

Cross-wise, to my recollection,
 As do I, in Jesu's praise.
 I the Trinity illustrate,
 Drinking watered orange-pulp —
 In three sips the Arian frustrate;
 While he drains his at one gulp.

VI.

Oh, those melons! If he's able
 We're to have a feast! so nice!
 One goes to the Abbot's table,
 All of us get each a slice.
 How go on your flowers? None double?
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
 Strange! — And I, too, at such trouble
 Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII.

There's a great text in Galatians,
 Once you trip on it, ertails
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
 One sure, if another fails:
 If I trip him just a-dying,
 Sure of heaven as sure can be,
 Spin him round and send him flying
 Off to hell, a Manichee?

VIII.

Or, my scrofulous French novel
 On gray paper with blunt type!
 Simply glance at it, you grovel
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
 If I double down its pages
 At the woful sixteenth print,
 When he gathers his greengages,
 Ope a sieve and slip it in 't!

IX.

Or, there's Satan! — one might venture
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
 Such a flaw in the indenture
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia
 We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*
 'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ,*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r — you swine!

THE LABORATORY.

ANCIEN RÉGIME.

I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze through these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy —
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee ?

II.

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do : they believe my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them ! — I am here.

III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder, — I am not in haste !
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

IV.

That in the mortar — you call it a gum ?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come !
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly, — is that poison too ?

V.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures !
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket !

VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live !
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead

VII.

Quick — is it finished ? The color 's too grim !
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim ?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer !

VIII.

What a drop ! She's not little, no minion like me !
That's why she ensnared him : this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes, — say, “no !”
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall
Shrivelled ; she fell not ; yet this does it all !

X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain ;
Let death be felt and the proof remain :
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace —
He is sure to remember her dying face !

XI.

Is it done ? Take my mask off ! Nay, be not morose ;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close :
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee !
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me ?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will !
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it — next moment I dance at the King's !

THE CONFESSIONAL.

[SPAIN.]

I.

It is a lie — their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies — there ! through my door
And ceiling, there ! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie — shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world !

II.

You think Priests just and holy men !
Before they put me in this den

I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover — shame avaunt !
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint : one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said : and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
"Ha !" quoth the father ; "much I blame
The sin ; yet wherefore idly grieve ?
Despair not — strenuously retrieve !
Nay, I will turn this love of thine
To lawful love, almost divine ;

VI.

"For he is young, and led astray,
This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
To change the laws of church and state ;
So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
Thou mayst demand and be possessed
Of all his plans, and next day steal
To me, and all those plans reveal,
That I and every priest, to purge
His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII.

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright ;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell ;
And I lay listening in such pride !
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;
“ And now make haste,” I said, “ to pray
The one spot from his soul away ;
To-night he comes, but not the same
Will look ! ” At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night : on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty ; something drew
My steps into the street ; I knew
It led me to the market-place :
Where, lo, on high, the father's face !

XII.

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
That stapled block . . . God sink the rest !
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear !
No heaven with them, no hell ! — and here,
No earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens

But shall bear God and man my cry,
Lies — lies, again — and still, they lie !

CRISTINA.

I.

She should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her !
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them :
But I 'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell (there 's my weakness)
What her look said ! — no vile cant, sure,
About " need to strew the bleakness
Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
That the sea feels " — no " strange yearning
That such souls have, most to lavish
Where there 's chance of least returning."

III.

Oh we 're sunk enough here, God knows !
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure though seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honors perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse
Which for once had play unstified
Seems the sole work of a lifetime
That away the rest have trifled.

V.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 't is resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together?

VII.

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
The world's honors, in derision,
Trampled out the light forever:
Never fear but there's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
— Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture!

VIII.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!
She has lost me, I have gained her;
Her soul's mine: and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended:
And then, come the next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I.

All 's over, then : does truth sound bitter
 As one at first believes ?
 Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
 About your cottage eaves !

II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
 I noticed that, to-day ;
 One day more bursts them open fully
 — You know the red turns gray.

III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest ?
 May I take your hand in mine ?
 Mere friends are we, — well, friends the merest
 Keep much that I resign :

IV.

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
 Though I keep with heart's endeavor, —
 Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
 Though it stay in my soul forever ! —

V.

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
 Or only a thought stronger ;
 I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
 Or so very little longer !

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

See, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
 Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;
 Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
 Have struggled through its binding osier rods ;
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
 Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by ;
 How the minute gray lichens, plate o'er plate,
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date !

LOVE.

So, the year 's done with !
(Love me forever !)
 All March begun with,
 April's endeavor ;
 May-wreaths that bound me
 June needs must sever ;
 Now snows fall round me,
 Quenching June's fever —
(Love me forever !)

MEETING AT NIGHT.

I.

The gray sea and the long black land ;
 And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
 And the startled little waves that leap
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
 And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
 And blue spurt of a lighted match,
 And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
 Than the two hearts beating each to each !

PARTING AT MORNING.

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
 And the sun looked over the mountain's rim :
 And straight was a path of gold for him,
 And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG.

I.

Nay but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?

Holds earth aught — speak truth — above her ?

Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall ?

II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;

To praise, you search the wide world over :

Then why not witness, calmly gazing,

If earth holds aught — speak truth — above her ?

Above this tress, and this, I touch

But cannot praise, I love so much !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I.

Let's contend no more, Love,

Strive nor weep :

All be as before, Love,

— Only sleep !

II.

What so wild as words are ?

I and thou

In debate, as birds are,

Hawk on bough !

III.

See the creature stalking

While we speak !

Hush and hide the talking,

Cheek on cheek !

IV.

What so false as truth is,

False to thee ?

Where the serpent's tooth is,

Shun the tree —

V.

Where the apple reddens

Never pry —

Lest we lose our Edens,

Eve and I.

VI.

Be a god and hold me
With a charm !
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm !

VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love !
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought —

VIII.

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX.

That shall be to-morrow,
Not to-night :
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight :

X.

— Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me !)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead !
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass ;
Little has yet been changed, I think :
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

II.

Sixteen years old when she died !
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ;
 It was not her time to love ; beside,
 Her life had many a hope and aim,
 Duties enough and little cares,
 And now was quiet, now astir,
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares, —
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
 What, your soul was pure and true,
 The good stars met in your horoscope,
 Made you of spirit, fire and dew —
 And, just because I was thrice as old
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
 Each was nought to each, must I be told ?
 We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

IV.

No, indeed ! for God above
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
 And creates the love to reward the love :
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few :
 Much is to learn, much to forget
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

V.

But the time will come, — at last it will,
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
 In the lower earth, in the years long still,
 That body and soul so pure and gay ?
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red —
 And what you would do with me, in fine,
 In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
 Given up myself so many times,
 Gained me the gains of various men,
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes ;

Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me :
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
What is the issue ? let us see !

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while !
My heart seemed full as it could hold ;
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So, hush, — I will give you this leaf to keep :
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand !
There, that is our secret : go to sleep !
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop —
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II.

Now, — the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one,)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
 Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
 And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone —
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
 Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
 Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
 Bought and sold.

.IV.

Now, — the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
 Through the chinks —
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
 As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
 Viewed the games.

V.

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve
 Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many tinkling fleece
 In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
 Melt away —
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
 Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
 For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
 Till I come.

VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,

All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades,
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, — and then,
All the men !
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force —
Gold, of course.
Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns !
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest !
Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

I.

Oh, what a dawn of day !
How the March sun feels like May !
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray ;
Only, my Love's away !
I'd as lief that the blue were gray.

II.

Runnels, which rillels swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
With a foaming head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell ;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III.

Dearest, three months ago !
 When we lived blocked-up with snow, —
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
 In, as far as the point could go —
 Not to our ingle, though,
 Where we loved each the other so !

IV.

Laughs with so little cause !
 We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face
 In the ash, as an artist draws ;
 Free on each other's flaws,
 How we chattered like two church daws !

V.

What's in the "Times" ? — a scold
 At the Emperor deep and cold ;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
 That's as fair as himself is bold :
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
 And she powders her hair with gold.

VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !
 Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sunflowers blow
 In a solid glow,
 And to break now and then the screen —
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
 Up a wild horse leaps between !

VII.

Try, will our table turn ?
 Lay your hands there light, and yearn
 Till the yearning slips
 Through the finger-tips
 In a fire which a few discern,
 And a very few feel burn,
 And the rest, they may live and learn !

VIII.

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck :
'T is our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woful case.
Help in the ocean-space !
Or, if no help, we 'll embrace.

IX.

See, how she looks now, dressed
In a sledging-cap and vest !
'T is a huge fur cloak —
Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast :
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X.

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man !
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI.

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmerizer Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep,
'T was a time when the heart could show
All — how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro ?

XII.

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe !

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath —
'T was a bubble born of breath,
 Neither sneer nor vaunt,
 Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth !
 Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith !

XIV.

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last
 Me, your own, your You, —
 Since, as truth is true,
I was You all the happy past —
 Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed ?

XV.

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
 How I look to you
 For the pure and true,
And the beauteous and the right, —
 Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threatens the white !

XVI.

What of a hasty word ?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
 By a worm's pin-prick
 Where its roots are quick ?
See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred —
 Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

XVII.

Foul be the world or fair
More or less, how can I care ?
 'Tis the world the same
 For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
 Wrong in the one thing rare —
Oh, it is hard to bear !

XVIII.

Here 's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows ;
 We shall have the word
 In a minor third,
There is none but the cuckoo knows :
 Heaps of the guelder-rose !
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX.

Could but November come,
Were but noisy birds struck dumb
 At the warning slash
 Of his driver's-lash —
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
 Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

XX.

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped
 We can stand apart,
 Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped, —
 Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt !

XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry
“ But one freezes here ! and why ?
 When a heart, as chill,
 At my own would thrill
Back to life, and its fires out-fly ?
 Heart, shall we live or die ?
The rest, . . . settle by and by ! ”

XXII.

So, she 'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
 It is twelve o'clock :
 I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar,
 I shall pull her through the door,
I shall have her for evermore !

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

I.

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
 The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square ;
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there !

II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least !
 There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast ;
 While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a bull
 Just on a mountain edge as bare as the creature's skull,
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull !
 — I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses ! Why ?
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take
 the eye !
 Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry ;
 You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries
 by ;
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets
 high ;
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V.

What of a villa ? Though winter be over in March by rights,
 'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the
 heights :
 You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam
 and wheeze,
 And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive-trees.

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you ? You've summer all at once ;
 In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
 'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers
 well,

The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and
sell.

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and
splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foambows
flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and
pash
Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a
sort of sash.

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and
mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs
on the hill.
Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever
and chill.

IX.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells
begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood,
draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new play, piping
hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were
shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of
the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and Cicero,
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the skirts of
Saint Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than
ever he preached."

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne
smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck in
her heart!

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;

No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in
life.

X.

But bless you, it's dear — it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the
rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays pass-
ing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still — ah, the pity, the
pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls
and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow
candles;

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with
handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better preven-
tion of scandals:

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

I.

Oh Galuppi. Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!

I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and
blind;

But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a heavy
mind!

II.

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it
brings.

What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were
the kings,

Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with
rings?

III.

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 't is arched by . . .
 what you call
 . . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the
 carnival:
 I was never out of England — it's as if I saw it all.

IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm
 in May?
 Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,
 When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you
 say?

V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red, —
 On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its
 bed,
 O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his
 head?

VI.

Well, and it was graceful of them — they'd break talk off and
 afford
 — She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he, to finger on his
 sword,
 While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

VII.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh
 on sigh,
 Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions —
 “Must we die?”
 Those commiserating sevenths — “Life might last! we can but
 try!”

VIII.

“Were you happy?” — “Yes.” — “And are you still as
 happy?” — “Yes. And you?”
 — “Then, more kisses!” — “Did *I* stop them, when a million
 seemed so few?”
 Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

IX.

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare
 say!

“Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!”

X.

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

XI.

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep through every nerve.

XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned:
“Dust and ashes. dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned.
The soul, doubtless, is immortal — where a soul can be discerned.

XIII.

“Yours for instance, you know physics, something of geology,
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
Butterflies may dread extinction, — you'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV.

“As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

XV.

“Dust and ashes!” So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too — what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

I.

The morn when first it thunders in March,
 The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say :
 As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
 Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
 No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
 In the valley beneath where, white and wide
 And washed by the morning water-gold,
 Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II.

River and bridge and street and square
 Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
 Through the live translucent bath of air,
 As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
 And of all I saw and of all I praised,
 The most to praise and the best to see,
 Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised :
 But why did it more than startle me ?

III.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
 Could you play me false who loved you so ?
 Some slights if a certain heart endures
 Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know !
 I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
 To break a silence that suits them best,
 But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
 When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV.

On the arch where olives overhead
 Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
 (That sharp-curved leaf which they never shed)
 'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
 And mark through the winter afternoons,
 By a gift God grants me now and then,
 In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
 Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
 For pleasure or profit, her men alive —

My business was hardly with them, I trow,
 But with empty cells of the human hive ;
 — With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
 The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
 Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
 Its face set full for the sun to shave.

VI.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
 Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
 Till the latest life in the painting stops,
 Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains :
 One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
 Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
 — A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
 The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does !
 They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
 The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
 Round the works of, you of the little wit !
 Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
 Now that they see God face to face,
 And have all attained to be poets, I hope ?
 'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII.

Much they reckon of your praise and you !
 But the wronged great souls — can they be quit
 Of a world where their work is all to do,
 Where you style them, you of the little wit,
 Old Master This and Early the Other,
 Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows :
 A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
 Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX.

And here where your praise might yield returns,
 And a handsome word or two give help,
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
 What, not a word for Stefano there,
 Of brow once prominent and starry,
 Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
 For his peerless painting ? (see Vasari.)

X.

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
 What a man's work comes to ! So he plans it,
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
 For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit* !
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labor,
 With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbor !
 'T is looking downward that makes one dizzy.

XI.

" If you knew their work you would deal your dole."
 May I take upon me to instruct you ?
 When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
 Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu* —
 The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
 Which the actual generations garble,
 Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
 And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

XII.

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
 As you might have been, as you cannot be ;
 Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there :
 And grew content in your poor degree
 With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
 And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
 And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
 And your little date, by their forms that stay.

XIII.

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am ?
 Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
 You would prove a model ? The Son of Priam
 Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
 You're wroth — can you slay your snake like Apollo ?
 You're grieved — still Niobe's the grander !
 You live — there's the Racers' frieze to follow :
 You die — there's the dying Alexander.

XIV.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
 Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
 Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
 You learned — to submit is a mortal's duty.

— When I say “you” ’t is the common soul,
 The collective, I mean : the race of Man
 That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
 And grow here according to God’s clear plan.

XV.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
 You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
 And cried with a start — What if we so small
 Be greater and grander the while than they ?
 Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature ?
 In both, of such lower types are we
 Precisely because of our wider nature ;
 For time, theirs — ours, for eternity.

XVI.

To-day’s brief passion limits their range ;
 It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
 They are perfect — how else ? they shall never change :
 We are faulty — why not ? we have time in store.
 The Artificer’s hand is not arrested
 With us ; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished :
 They stand for our copy, and, once invested
 With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

XVII.

’T is a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —
 The better ! What’s come to perfection perishes.
 Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven :
 Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
 Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto !
 Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
 Done at a stroke, was just (was it not ?) “O !”
 Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII.

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
 But what and where depend on life’s minute ?
 Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
 Our first step out of the gulf or in it ?
 Shall Man, such step within his endeavor,
 Man’s face, have no more play and action
 Than joy which is crystallized forever,
 Or grief, an eternal petrification ?

XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?" —
Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man, whatever the issue!
Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:
To bring the invisible full into play!
Let the visible go to the dogs — what matters?"

XX.

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 't is no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
Why, honor them now! (ends my allocution)
Nor confer your degree when the folks leave college.

XXI.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate —
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

XXII.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene, —
When our faith in the same has stood the test —
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labor are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter — who but Cimabue?

Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
 From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
 Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
 So, now to my special grievance — heigh-ho !

XXIV.

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
 Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
 Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er :
 — No getting again what the church has grasped !
 The works on the wall must take their chance ;
 “ Works never conceded to England's thick clime ! ”
 (I hope they prefer their inheritance
 Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV.

When they go at length, with such a shaking
 Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
 Each master his way through the black streets taking,
 Where many a lost work breathes though badly —
 Why don't they bethink them of who has merited ?
 Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
 Such doom, how a captive might be out-ferreted ?
 Why is it they never remember me ?

XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
 Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose ;
 Nor the wronged Lippino ; and not a word I
 Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's :
 But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
 To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
 Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye ?
 Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco ?

XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
 My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
 Save me a sample, give me the hap
 Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman ?
 No Virgin by him the somewhat petty.
 Of finical touch and tempera crumbly —
 Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
 Contribute so much, I ask him humbly ?

XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,
 With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret
 (Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
 Yor bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?)
 Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
 Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
 If such remain, as is my conviction,
 The hoarding it does you but little honor.

XXIX.

They pass; for them the panels may thrill,
 The tempera grow alive and tingly;
 Their pictures are left to the mercies still
 Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,
 Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
 Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
 At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
 Before some clay-cold vile Carlino!

XXX.

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
 Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it,
 Oh, never! it shall not be counted true —
 That a certain precious little tablet
 Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover —
 Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
 And, left for another than I to discover,
 Turns up at last! and to whom? — to whom?

XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
 Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe!
 Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
 My Koh-i-noor — or (if that's a platitude)
 Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye;
 So, in anticipative gratitude,
 What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII.

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
 Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
 To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,
 We shall begin by way of rejoicing;

None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
 Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII.

This time we'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot —
 No mere display at the stone of Dante,
 But a kind of sober Witanagemot
 (Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod videas ante*)
 Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
 How Art may return that departed with her.
 Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
 And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

XXXIV.

How we shall prologuize, how we shall perorate,
 Utter fit things upon art and history,
 Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate,
 Make of the want of the age no mystery;
 Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
 Show — monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
 Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
 While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

XXXV.

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
 Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an "*issimo*,")
 To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
 And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo*:
 And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

XXXVI.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
 While "God and the People" plain for its motto,
 Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
 At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

"DE GUSTIBUS — "

I.

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say, —
 The happier they !
 Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the 'beanflowers' tune,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June !

II.

What I love best in all the world
 Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
 (If I get my head from out the mouth
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
 And come again to the land of lands) —
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,
 Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
 And one sharp tree — 't is a cypress — stands,
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
 My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what expands
 Before the house, but the great opaque
 Blue breadth of sea without a break ?
 While, in the house, forever crumbles
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
 A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
 And says there's news to-day — the king
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
 Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling :
 — She hopes they have not caught the felons.
 Italy, my Italy !
 Queen Mary's saying serves for me —

(When fortune's malice
 Lost her, Calais)
 Open my heart and you will see
 Graved inside of it, "Italy."
 Such lovers old are I and she :
 So it always was, so shall ever be !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

I.

Oh, to be in England
 Now that April's there,
 And whoever wakes in England
 Sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
 In England — now !

II.

And after April, when May follows,
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
 Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
 Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge —
 That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
 Lest you should think he never could recapture
 The first fine careless rapture !
 And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
 The buttercups, the little children's dower
 — Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-West died away ;
 Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay ;
 Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;
 In the dimmest North-East distance dawned Gibraltar grand and
 gray ;
 " Here and here did England help me : how can I help Eng-
 land ? " — say,
 Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
 While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SAUL.

I.

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,

Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.

And he: "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,

Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet, Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet. For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days, Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,

To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife, And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II.

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III.

Then I, as was meet, Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet, And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was un-looped;

I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped; Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,

That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,

And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.

At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I descried A something more black than the blackness — the vast, the upright

Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.

Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent-roof, showed Saul.

IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide
 On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side ;
 He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs
 And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily hangs,
 Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
 With the spring-time, — so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind
 and dumb.

V.

Then I tuned my harp, — took off the lilies we twine round its
 chords
 Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide — those sun-
 beams like swords !
 And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
 So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
 They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
 Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed ;
 And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
 Into eve and the blue far above us, — so blue and so far !

VI.

— Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each
 leave his mate
 To fly after the player ; then, what makes the crickets elate
 Till for boldness they fight one another : and then, what has
 weight
 To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house —
 There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half
 mouse !
 God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our
 fear,
 To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when
 hand
 Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great
 hearts expand
 And grow one in the sense of this world's life. — And then, the
 last song
 When the dead man is praised on his journey — “ Bear, bear
 him along,
 With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets ! Are balm
 seeds not here

To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
 Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!" — And then, the
 glad chaunt
 Of the marriage, — first go the young maidens, next, she whom
 we vaunt
 As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling. — And then, the great
 march
 Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
 Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends? Then,
 the chorus intoned
 As the levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
 But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened
 apart;
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles
 'gan dart
 From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
 So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there
 erect.
 And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
 As I sang: —

IX.

 " Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit
 feels waste,
 Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
 Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
 The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver
 shock
 Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
 And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
 And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust
 divine,
 And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of
 wine,
 And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
 That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
 How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
 All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou
 didst guard
 When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious re-
 ward?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men
 sung
 The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
 Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest,
 I have lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime, and all was for
 best ' '
 Then they sung through their tears in strong triumph, not
 much, but the rest,
 And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence
 grew
 Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained
 true :
 And the friends of thy boyhood — that boyhood of wonder and
 hope,
 Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's
 scope, —
 Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch ; a people is thine ;
 And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head com-
 bine !
 On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like
 the throe
 That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold go)
 High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,
 —all
 Brought to blaze on the head of one creature — King Saul ! ”

X.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, — heart, hand, harp and
 voice,
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for — as when, dare I say,
 The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its
 array,
 And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot — “ Saul ! ” cried I, and
 stopped,
 And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung
 propped
 By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his
 name.
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the
 aim,
 And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he
 alone,
 While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust
 of stone
 A year's snow bound about for a breastplate, — leaves grasp of
 the sheet ?

Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his
 feet,
 And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain
 of old,
 With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold —
 Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and
 scar
 Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest — all hail, there
 they are !
 — Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his
 crest
 For their food in the ardors of summer. One long shudder
 thrilled
 All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
 At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.
 What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt hope
 and despair,
 Death was past, life not come : so he waited. Awhile his right
 hand
 Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to re-
 mand
 To their place what new objects should enter : 't was Saul as
 before.
 I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any
 more
 Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the
 shore,
 At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean — a sun's slow decline
 Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine
 Base with base to knit strength more intensely : so, arm folded
 arm
 O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI.

What spell or what charm,
 (For, awhile there was trouble within me,) what next should I
 urge
 To sustain him where song had restored him ? — Song filled to
 the verge
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty · beyond, on what
 fields,
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they
 put by ?

He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not: he lets me praise
 life,
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife
 Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the
 sheep
 Fed in silence — above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;
 And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
 'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and
 the sky:
 And I laughed — "Since my days are ordained to be passed
 with my flocks,
 Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the
 rocks,
 Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
 Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
 Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that
 gains,
 And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And now
 these old trains
 Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the
 string
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus —

XIII.

"Yea, my King,"
 I began — "thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that
 spring
 From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by
 brute:
 In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears
 fruit.
 Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree, — how its stem
 trembled first
 Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
 The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too,
 in turn,
 Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was
 to learn,
 E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates
 shall we slight,
 When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the
 plight
 Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so!
 stem and branch

Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine
shall stanch

Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for ! the spirit be thine !

By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a boy.

Crush that life, and behold its wine running ! Each deed thou
hast done

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world ; until e'en as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though
tempests efface,

Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere
trace

The results of his past summer-prime, — so, each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill

Thy whole people the countless, with ardor, till they too give
forth

A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the
North

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the
past !

But the license of age has its limit ; thou diest at last :

As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,

So with man — so his power and his beauty forever take flight.

No ! Again a long draught of my soul-wine ! Look forth o'er
the years !

Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual ; begin with the
seer's !

Is Saul dead ? In the depth of the vale make his tomb — bid
arise

A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built to the
skies,

Let it mark where the great First King slumbers : whose fame
would ye know ?

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go

In great characters cut by the scribe, — Such was Saul, so he
did ;

With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid, —

For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there ! Which fault
to amend,

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall
spend

(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their praise, and record

With the gold of the graver, Saul's story, — the statesman's
great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave

With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-winds
rave :

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
In thy being ' Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou
art ' "

XIV.

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant me
that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure, — my shield and my
sword

In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my
word, —

Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavor
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as
ever

On the new stretch of heaven above me — till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance — God's throne
from man's grave '

Let me tell out my tale to its ending — my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took
part,

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep !
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron
retrieves

Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV.

I say then, — my song

While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him — he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand re-
plumed

His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see — the huge sweat that his countenance
bathes,

He wipes off with the robe ; and he girds now his loins as of
yore,

And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set be-
fore.

He is Saul, ye remember in glory, — ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion ; and still, though
much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did
 choose,
 To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
 So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the pile
 Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there
 awhile,
 And sat out my singing, — one arm round the tent-prop, to
 raise
 His bent head, and the other hung slack — till I touched on the
 praise
 I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there,
 And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was
 'ware
 That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
 Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak roots
 which please
 To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
 If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but
 slow
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: through
 my hair
 The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with
 kind power —
 All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
 Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized
 mine —
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the
 sign?
 I yearned — “Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
 I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;
 I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
 As this moment, — had love but the warrant, love's heart to
 dispense!”

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more — no song more!
 out-broke —

XVII.

“I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
 I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
 And pronounced on the rest of his handwork — returned him
 again
 His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.
 I report, as a man may of God's work — all's love, yet all's law.
 Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked

To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was
asked.

Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite
Care!

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?

I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.

And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.

Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.

There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)

Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift. — Behold, I could love if I durst!

But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.
— What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors
great and small,

Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth
appall?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts
shift?

Here, the creatures surpass the Creator, — the end, what Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less
power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the
best?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection, — succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute
of night?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now, — and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set

Clear and safe in new light and new life, — a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended — who knows? — or endure!

The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make
sure;

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII.

"I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my
prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread
Sabaoth:

I will! — the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth
To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my de-
spair?

This; — 'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what
man Would do!

See the King — I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall
through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would — knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou — so
wilt thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown —
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the
most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I
seek

In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this
hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ
stand!"

XIX.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
 There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
 Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware :
 I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,
 As a runner beset by the populace famished for news —
 Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with
 her crews ;
 And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge : but I fainted
 not,
 For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, sup-
 pressed
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
 Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth —
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth ;
 In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills ;
 In the shuddering forests' held breath ; in the sudden wind-
 thrills ;
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling
 still
 Though averted with wonder and dread ; in the birds stiff and
 chill
 That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with
 awe :
 E'en the serpent that slid away silent, — he felt the new law.
 The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the
 flowers ;
 The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-
 bowers :
 And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
 With their obstinate, all but hushed voices — " E'en so, it is
 so ! "

MY STAR.

All that I know
 Of a certain star
 Is, it can throw
 (Like the angled spar)
 Now a dart of red,
 Now a dart of blue ;
 Till my friends have said

They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue !
Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower, hangs furled :
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it,
What matter to me if their star is a world ?
Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I love it.

BY THE FIRESIDE.

I.

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn evenings come ;
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue ?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too !

II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose !

III.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
" There he is at it, deep in Greek :
Now then, or never, out we slip
To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship ! "

IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends !
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

V.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees —
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

VI.

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand :
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead !

VII.

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge !
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain ?

VIII.

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings !

IX.

Does it feed the little lake below ?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow !

X.

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI.

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers !
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours,

XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,

O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needed mat of moss,

XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening — nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-colored flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

XIV.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-gray and mostly wet ;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike !

XVI.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams —

XVII.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont :
'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt —

XIX.

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
 For a pent-house properly projects
 Where three carved beams make a certain show,
 Dating — good thought of our architect's —
 Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,
 And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
 The place is silent and aware;
 It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
 But that is its own affair.

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
 Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
 Whom else could I dare look backward for,
 With whom beside should I dare pursue
 The path gray heads abhor?

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
 Youth, flowery all the way, there stops —
 Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
 Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
 One inch from our life's safe hem!

XXIII.

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
 No longer watch you as you sit
 Reading by fire-light, that great brow
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,
 Mutely, my heart knows how —

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,
 You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
 And you, too, find without rebuff
 Response your soul seeks many a time
 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV.

My own, confirm me! If I tread
 This path back, is it not in pride

To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead ?

XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct !
At first, 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do ; each is sucked
In each now : on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands ?

XXVIII.

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine !

XXIX.

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss ?

XXX.

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain
And gather what we let fall !

XXXI.

What did I say ? — that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell : 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve
 'T is better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
 It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII.

Hither we walked then, side by side,
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
 While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
 And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
 And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss,

XXXV.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
 Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
 The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
 See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
 Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again — but wait!

XXXVII.

Oh moment, one and infinite!
 The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
 How gray at once is the evening grown —
One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII.

We two stood there with never a third,
 But each by each, as each knew well:

The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less, and what worlds away !
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this !

XL.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her :
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends — lovers that might have been.

XLI.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test !
“ Hold the last fast ! ” runs the rhyme.

XLII.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such.
When nothing you mar but the year can mend ;
But a last leaf — fear to touch !

XLIII.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind — best chance of all !
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall !

XLIV.

Worth how well, those dark gray eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize !

XLV.

You might have turned and tried a man,
 Set him a space to weary and wear,
 And prove which suited more your plan,
 His best of hope or his worst despair,
 Yet end as he began.

XLVI.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
 And filled my empty heart at a word.
 If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
 They are one and one, with a shadowy third ;
 One near one is too far.

XLVII.

A moment after, and hands unseen
 Were hanging the night around us fast ;
 But we knew that a bar was broken between
 Life and life : we were mixed at last
 In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII.

The forests had done it ; there they stood ;
 We caught for a moment the powers at play :
 They had mingled us so, for once and good,
 Their work was done — we might go or stay,
 They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX.

How the world is made for each of us !
 How all we perceive and know in it
 Tends to some moment's product thus,
 When a soul declares itself — to wit,
 By its fruit, the thing it does !

L.

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
 It forwards the general deed of man,
 And each of the Many helps to recruit
 The life of the race by a general plan ;
 Each living his own, to boot.

LI.

I am named and known by that moment's feat ;
 There took my station and degree ;

So grew my own small life complete,
 As nature obtained her best of me —
 One born to love you, sweet !

LII.

And to watch you sink by the fireside now
 Back again, as you mutely sit
 Musing by fire-light, that great brow
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,
 Yonder, my heart knows how !

LIII.

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
 And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too ;
 And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
 When autumn comes : which I mean to do
 One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou —
 Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
 As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say —
 Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
 A whole long life through, had but love its will,
 Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
 Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
 The beating of my heart to reach its place.
 When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone ?
 When cry for the old comfort and find none ?
 Never, I know ! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade — 't is willed so ! Might I save,
 Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
 Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
 It is not to be granted. But the soul
 Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole ;
 Vainly the flesh fades ; soul makes all things new.

IV.

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
Who never is dishonored in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

V.

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by !
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky !

VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think
That disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed ?
I know that nature ! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell ;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best :
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

VIII.

I seem to see ! We meet and part ; 't is brief ;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank ;
That is a portrait of me on the wall —
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call :
And for all this, one little hour to thank !

IX.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me — wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,

"Therefore she is immortally my bride ;
 Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

X.

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
 I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft.
 Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
 The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
 — Where was it till the sunset? where anon
 It will be at the sunrise! What's to blame?"

XI.

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
 The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
 Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
 Is the remainder of the way so long
 Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?
 Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

XII.

— Ah, but the fresher faces! "Is it true,"
 Thou'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and new?
 Some hair, — how can one choose but grasp such wealth?
 And if a man would press his lips to lips
 Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
 The dewdrop out of, must it be by stealth?"

XIII.

"It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
 More than if such a picture I prefer
 Passing a day with, to a room's bare side:
 The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
 Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
 A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?"

XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
 My own self sell myself, my hand attach
 Its warrant to the very thefts from me —
 Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
 Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
 Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
 Away to the new faces — disentranced,

(Say it and think it) obdurate no more,
 Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
 Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
 Image and superscription once they bore!

XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend, —
 It all comes to the same thing at the end,
 Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
 Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
 Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
 Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
 Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
 Why need the other women know so much,
 And talk together, "Such the look and such
 The smile he used to love with, then as now!"

XVIII.

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
 Such hardships in the few years left behind,
 If free to take and light my lamp, and go
 Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
 Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
 The better that they are so blank, I know!

XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
 Within my mind each look, get more and more
 By heart each word, too much to learn at first;
 And join thee all the fitter for the pause
 'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
 For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:
 What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
 Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
 I'll say then, here's a trial and a task —
 Is it to bear? — if easy, I'll not ask:
 Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

XXI.

Pride? — when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through! — when I find,

Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved. — And yet it will not be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

I wonder do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III.

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles, — blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

V.

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air —
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
 Such miracles performed in play,
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,
 Such letting nature have her way
 While heaven looks from its towers !

VII.

How say you ? Let us, O my dove,
 Let us be unashamed of soul,
 As earth lies bare to heaven above !
 How is it under our control
 To love or not to love ?

VIII.

I would that you were all to me,
 You that are just so much, no more.
 Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free !
 Where does the fault lie ? What the core
 O' the wound, since wound must be ?

IX.

I would I could adopt your will,
 See with your eyes, and set my heart
 Beating by yours, and drink my fill
 At your soul's springs, — your part, my part
 In life, for good and ill.

X.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
 Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
 Catch your soul's warmth, — I pluck the rose
 And love it more than tongue can speak —
 Then the good minute goes.

XI.

Already how am I so far
 Out of that minute ? Must I go
 Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,
 Fixed by no friendly star ?

XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn !
 Where is the thread now ? Off again !

The old trick ! Only I discern —
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

I.

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to, —
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to !

II.

This is a heart the Queen leant on.
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on —
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on !

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

I.

That was I, you heard last night
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small :
Life was dead and so was light.

II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music ; that was I.

III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof :

In at heaven and out again,
Lightning! — where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV.

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

V.

So wore night; the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers,
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you — “When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
Light last on the evening slopes,

VII.

“One friend in that path shall be,
To secure my step from wrong;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see.”

VIII.

Never say — as something bodes —
“So, the worst has yet a worse!
When life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the task-master's curse
Than such music on the roads!

IX.

“When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning rent,
Show the final storm begun —

X.

“When the fire-fly hides its spot,
When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot, —
Shall another voice avail,
That shape be where these are not?

XI.

“Has some plague a longer lease,
Proffering its help uncouth?
Can't one even die in peace?
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
Is that face the last one sees?”

XII.

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood — the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

ONE WAY OF LOVE.

I.

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III.

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion — heaven or hell?

She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!
 Lose who may — I still can say,
 Those who win heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

I.

June was not over
 Though past the full,
 And the best of her roses
 Had yet to blow,
 When a man I know
 (But shall not discover,
 Since ears are dull,
 And time discloses)
 Turned him and said with a man's true air,
 Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were, —
 "If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?"

II.

Well, dear, in-doors with you!
 True! serene deadness
 Tries a man's temper.
 What's in the blossom
 June wears on her bosom?
 Can it clear scores with you?
 Sweetness and redness,
Eadem semper!
 Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
 If June mend her bower now, your hand left unsightly
 By plucking the roses, — my June will do rightly.

III.

And after, for pastime,
 If June be refulgent
 With flowers in completeness,
 All petals, no prickles,
 Delicious as trickles
 Of wine poured at mass-time, —
 And choose One indulgent
 To redness and sweetness:
 Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
 June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-rider,
 And stop the fresh film-work, — why, June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN.

I.

That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers !

II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet !

III.

You like us for a glance, you know —
For a word's sake
Or a sword's sake,
All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say —
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V.

All 's our own, to make the most of, Sweet —
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet !

VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar — for you could not, Sweet !

VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there :
Be its beauty
Its sole duty !
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there !

VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX.

As, — why must one, for the love foregone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth, — the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X.

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'T would undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII.

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection —
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!

— A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her !

XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose, —
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose :

XVII.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals, —
Last, some old king locks it up, morose !

XVIII.

Then how grace a rose ? I know a way !
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather ?
Smell, kiss, wear it — at last, throw away !

RESPECTABILITY.

I.

Dear, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim " I know you both,
Have recognized your plighted troth,
Am sponsor for you : live in peace ! " —
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears !

II.

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament, —
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Through wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevard break again
To warmth and light and bliss !

III.

I know ! the world proscribes not love ;
Allows my finger to caress

Your lips' contour and downiness,
 Provided it supply a glove.
 The world's good word! — the Institute!
 Guizot receives Montalembert!
 Eh? Down the court three lampions flare:
 Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I.

Room after room,
 I hunt the house through
 We inhabit together.
 Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her —
 Next time, herself! — not the trouble behind her
 Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II.

Yet the day wears,
 And door succeeds door;
 I try the fresh fortune —
 Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
 Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
 Spend my whole day in the quest, — who cares?
 But 't is twilight, you see, — with such suites to explore
 Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

Escape me?
 Never —
 Beloved!
 While I am I, and you are you,
 So long as the world contains us both,
 Me the loving and you the loth,
 While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
 My life is a fault at last, I fear:
 It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
 Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
 But what if I fail of my purpose here?
 It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,

And baffled, get up and begin again, —
So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
Than a new one, straight to the selfsame mark,
I shape me —
Ever
Removed!

IN THREE DAYS.

I.

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn!
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine, —
Only a touch and we combine!

II.

Too long, this time of year, the days!
But nights, at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her! What is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

III.

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent, as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Outbreaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Through lights and darks how manifold —
The dark inspired, the light controlled!
As early Art embrowns the gold.

IV.

What great fear, should one say, "Three days
That change the world might change as well
Your fortune; and if joy delays,

Be happy that no worse befell ! ”
 What small fear, if another says,
 “ Three days and one short night beside
 May throw no shadow on your ways ;
 But years must teem with change untried,
 With chance not easily defied,
 With an end somewhere undescried.”
 No fear ! — or if a fear be born
 This minute, it dies out in scorn.
 Fear ? I shall see her in three days
 And one night, now the nights are short,
 Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

I.

Never any more,
 While I live,
 Need I hope to see his face
 As before.
 Once his love grown chill,
 Mine may strive :
 Bitterly we re-embrace,
 Single still.

II.

Was it something said,
 Something done,
 Vexed him ? was it touch of hand,
 Turn of head ?
 Strange ! that very way
 Love begun :
 I as little understand
 Love's decay.

III.

When I sewed or drew,
 I recall
 How he looked as if I sung,
 — Sweetly too.
 If I spoke a word,
 First of all
 Up his cheek the color sprung,
 Then he heard.

IV.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

V.

"Speak, I love thee best!"
He exclaimed:
"Let thy love my own foretell!"
I confessed:
"Clasp my heart on thine
Now unblamed,
Since upon thy soul as well
Hangeth mine!"

VI.

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth:
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

VII.

That was all I meant,
— To be just,
And the passion I had raised,
To content.
Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange?

VIII.

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
— Paid my debt!

Gave more life and more,
 Till, all gone,
 He should smile "She never seemed
 Mine before.

IX.

"What, she felt the while,
 Must I think?
 Love's so different with us men!"
 He should smile:
 "Dying for my sake—
 White and pink!
 Can't we touch these bubbles then
 But they break?"

X.

Dear, the pang is brief,
 Do thy part,
 Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
 Grows belief!
 Well, this cold clay clod
 Was man's heart:
 Crumble it, and what comes next?
 Is it God?

WOMEN AND ROSES.

I.

I dream of a red-rose tree.
 And which of its roses three
 Is the dearest rose to me?

II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
 In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
 Floating the women faded for ages,
 Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
 Then follow women fresh and gay,
 Living and loving and loved to-day,
 Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
 Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time !
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you ?
Oh, to possess and be possessed !
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die ! — In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V.

Dear rose, thy joy 's undimmed,
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI.

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once ! But no — the old measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn :
First streak of a new morn.

VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,

Shaped her to his mind ! — Alas ! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE.

I.

Let them fight it out, friend ! things have gone too far.
God must judge the couple : leave them as they are
— Whichever one 's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt 's with, to my story !

II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment ?

III.

Who 's the culprit of them ? How must he conceive
God — the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
“Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her :
Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either !”

IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes ;
Then go live his life out ! Life will try his nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes !
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

VI.

What 's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide ?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance ?

VII.

So much for the culprit. Who 's the martyred man ?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can !
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven !

VIII.

All or nothing, stake it ! Trusts he God or no ?
 Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be it so !
 Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
 Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses !

IX.

Ah, "forgive " you bid him ? While God's champion lives,
 Wrong shall be resisted : dead, why, he forgives.
 But you must not end my friend ere you begin him ;
 Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X.

Once more — Will the wronger, at this last of all,
 Dare to say, "I did wrong," rising in his fall ?
 No ? — Let go, then ! Both the fighters to their places !
 While I count three, step you back as many paces !

AFTER.

Take the cloak from his face, and at first
 Let the corpse do its worst !

How he lies in his rights of a man !
 Death has done all death can.
 And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
 He recks not, he heeds
 Nor his wrong nor my vengeance ; both strike
 On his senses alike,
 And are lost in the solemn and strange
 Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
 His offence, my disgrace ?
 I would we were boys as of old
 In the field, by the fold :
 His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
 Were so easily borne !

I stand here now, he lies in his place :
 Cover the face !

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I.

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
— And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb — and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.

O world, as God has made it! All is beauty;
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!) — that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently, — with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
— My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent).

VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong —
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA.

I.

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II.

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at —
My starting moves your laughter!

III.

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
 And a certain use in the world no doubt,
 Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
 'Mid the blank miles round about :

IV.

For there I picked up on the heather,
 And there I put inside my breast
 A moulted feather, an eagle-feather !
 Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY.

I.

Stand still, true poet that you are !
 I know you ; let me try and draw you.
 Some night you 'll fail us : when afar
 You rise, remember one man saw you,
 Knew you, and named a star !

II.

My star, God's glow-worm ! Why extend
 That loving hand of his which leads you,
 Yet locks you safe from end to end
 Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
 Just saves your light to spend ?

III.

His clenched hand shall unclose at last,
 I know, and let out all the beauty :
 My poet holds the future fast,
 Accepts the coming ages' duty,
 Their present for this past.

IV.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
 Shall clear, to God the chalice raising ;
 "Others give best at first, but thou
 Fore'er set'st our table praising,
 Keep'st the good wine till now !"

V.

Meantime, I 'll draw you as you stand,
 With few or none to watch and wonder .

I'll say — a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And colored like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII.

And each bystander of them all
Could criticise, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
— To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live wheelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX.

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X.

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the bluebell's womb
What time, with ardors manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify, — refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII.

And there's the extract, flased and fine,
 And priced and salable at last !
 And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
 To paint the future from the past,
 Put blue into their line.

XIII.

Hobbs hints blue, — straight he turtle eats :
 Nobbs prints blue, — claret crowns his cup :
 Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats, —
 Both gorge. Who fished the murex up ?
 What porridge had John Keats ?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.

I.

Hist, but a word, fair and soft !
 Forth and be judged, Master Hugues !
 Answer the question I've put you so oft :
 What do you mean by your mountainous fugues ?
 See, we're alone in the loft, —

II.

I, the poor organist here,
 Hugues, the composer of note,
 Dead though, and done with, this many a year :
 Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,
 Make the world prick up its ear !

III.

See, the church empties apace :
 Fast they extinguish the lights.
 Hallo there, sacristan ! Five minutes' grace,
 Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
 Balks one of holding the base.

IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds,
 Hushing its hundreds at once,
 Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds !
 — O you may challenge them, not a response
 Get the church-saints on their rounds !

V.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
— March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout —

VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just —
Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

VII.

Here 's your book, younger folks shelve!
Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
Here 's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII.

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak,
You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

X.

Sure you said — " Good, the mere notes!
Still, couldst thou take my intent,
Know what procured me our Company's votes —
A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
Parted the sheep from the goats!"

XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
Quick, ere my candle 's a snuff

— Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch —
I believe in you, but that's not enough:
 Give my conviction a clinch!

XII.

First you deliver your phrase
 — Nothing propound, that I see,
 Fit in itself for much blame or much praise —
 Answered no less, where no answer needs be;
 Off start the Two on their ways.

XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,
 Volunteer needlessly help;
 In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
 So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,
 Argument's hot to the close.

XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid;
 Two must discept, — has distinguished;
 Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;
 Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing wished:
 Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV.

One says his say with a difference;
 More of expounding, explaining!
 All now is wrangle, abuse and vociferance;
 Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-restraining:
 Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive;
 Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
 Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
 Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:
 Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

XVII.

Now, they ply axes, and crowbars;
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII.

Est fuga, volvitur rota.

On we drift : where looms the dim port ?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota ;
Something is gained, if one caught but the import —
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha !

XIX.

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All 's like . . . it 's like . . . for an instance I 'm trying . . .
There ! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying !

XX.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim — “ But where 's music, the dickens ?
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
Blackened to the stoutest of tickens ? ”

XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous :
Prove me such censure unfounded !
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous —
Hopes 't was for something, his organ-pipes sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows ?

XXII.

Is it your moral of Life ?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife ?

XXIII.

Over our heads truth and nature —
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature —
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland ;

Nothing grows something which quietly closes
 Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land
 Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV.

Ah but traditions, inventions,
 (Say we and make up a visage)
 So many men with such various intentions,
 Down the past ages, must know more than this age!
 Leave we the web its dimensions!

XXVI.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
 Proved a mere mountain in labor?
 Better submit; try again; what's the clef?
 'Faith, 't is no trifle for pipe and for tabor —
 Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
 Learning it once, who would lose it?
 Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
 Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it —
 Nature, through cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII.

Hugues! I advise *meâ pœnâ*
 (Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
 Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
 Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
 Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

XXIX.

While in the roof, if I'm right there,
 . . . Lo you, the wick in the socket!
 Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
 What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
 Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
 And find a poor devil has ended his cares
 At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS.

The Grand-Master's Prefect.	The Republic's Admiral.
The Patriarch's Nuncio.	LOYS DE DREUX, Knight-Novice.
Initiated Druses — DJABAL, KHALIL, ANAEL, MAANI, KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, and others	
Uninitiated Druses. Prefect's Guard, Nuncio's Attendants, Admiral's Force.	

TIME, 14—.

PLACE, *An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonized by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.*

SCENE, *A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.*

ACT I.

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, and other initiated Druses, each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation,—

Kar. The moon is carried off in purple fire:
Day breaks at last! Break glory, with the day,
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge — our Founder's flesh,
As he resumes our Founder's function!

Ragh. — Death

Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved
So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea!

Ay. — Most joy be thine, O Mother-mountain! Thy brood
Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus — but thus! Behind, our Prefect's corpse;
Before, a presence like the morning — thine,

Absolute Djabal late, — God Hakeem now
That day breaks !

Kar. Off then, with disguise at last !
As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture ! Cry,
'Tis the Druse Nation, warders on our mount
Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,
— No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,
No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we
Who rise . . .

Ay. Who shout . . .

Ragh. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha —
Spoil of the spoiler ! Brave !

[*They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the hall.*]

Kar. Hold !

Ay. — Mine, I say ;
And mine shall it continue !

Kar. Just this fringe !
Take anything beside ! Lo, spire on spire,
Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top
O' the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously
Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
Yon cornice ! Where the huge veil, they suspend
Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,
Floats wide, then falls again as if its slave,
The scented air, took heart now, and anon
Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness
Above the gloom they droop in — all the porch
Is jewelled o'er with frostwork character ;
And see yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble stone :
Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so thou leav'st me
This single fringe !

Ay. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-fox ? Help !
— Three hand-breadths of gold fringe, my son was set
To twist, the night he died !

Kar. Nay, hear the knave !
And I could witness my one daughter borne,
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold
These arms, be mute, lest word of mine should mar
Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
A day, prevent his sailing hence for Rhodes —
How know I else ? — Hear me denied my right
By such a knave !

Ragh. [*interposing.*] Each ravage for himself !
 Booty enough ! On, Druses ! Be there found
 Blood and a heap behind us ; with us, Djabal
 Turned Hakeem ; and before us, Lebanon !
 Yields the porch ? Spare not ! There his minions dragged
 Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's couch !
 Ayoo ! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's pride,
 Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his brow,
 Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work there !
 Onward in Djabal's name !

As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL. A pause and silence.

Kha. Was it for this,
 Djabal hath summoned you ? Deserve you thus
 A portion in to-day's event ? What, here —
 When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes
 Sink low, your tongues lie still, — at Djabal's side,
 Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
 Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape, —
 Dispute you for these gauds ?

Ay. How say'st thou, Khalil ?
 Doubtless our Master prompts thee ! Take the fringe,
 Old Karshook ! I supposed it was a day . . .

Kha. For pillage ?

Kar. Hearken, Khalil ! Never spoke
 A boy so like a song-bird ; we avouch thee
 Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
 Except thy bright twin-sister ; thou and Anael
 Challenge his prime regard : but we may crave
 (Such nothings as we be) a portion too
 Of Djabal's favor ; in him we believed,
 His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,
 Kept silence till this daybreak — so, may claim
 Reward : who grudges me my claim ?

Ay. To-day
 Is not as yesterday !

Ragh. Stand off !

Kha. Rebel you ?
 Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
 His wrath on you, the day of our Return ?

Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the fringe ! Hound !
 must the earth

Vomit her plagues on us through thee ? — and thee ?
 Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault !

Kha. Oh, shame !
 Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
 Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore

Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's ridge,
 Its birthplace, hither ! " Let the sea divide
 These hunters from their prey," you said ; " and safe
 In this dim islet's virgin solitude
 Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time
 Fan it to fire ; till Hakeem rise again,
 According to his word that, in the flesh
 Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
 He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
 And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
 Lead us himself to Lebanon once more."
 Was 't not thus you departed years ago,
 Ere I was born ?

Druses. 'T was even thus, years ago.

Kha. And did you call — (according to old laws
 Which bid us, lest the sacred grow profane,
 Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
 With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live
 As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,
 Druse only with the Druses) — did you call
 Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage,
 (Mad to pursue e'en hither through the sea
 The remnant of our tribe,) a race self vowed
 To endless warfare with his hordes and him,
 The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle ?

Kar. And why else rend we down, wrench up, rase out ?
 These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited
 For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
 Than aught we fled — their Prefect ; who began
 His promised mere paternal governance,
 By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs
 Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
 Of crushing, with our nation's memory
 Each chance of our return, and taming us
 Bondslaves to Rhodes forever — all, he thinks
 To end by this day's treason.

Kha.

Say I not ?

You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
 Your Sheikhs cut off, your very garb proscribed,
 Must yet receive one degradation more ;
 The Knights at last throw off the mask — transfer,
 As tributary now and appanage,
 This islet they are but protectors of,
 To their own ever-craving liege, the Church,
 Who licenses all crimes that pay her thus.
 You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned

(Pursuant to I know not what vile pact)
 To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie
 His predecessor in all wickedness.
 When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
 Djabal, the man in semblance, but our God
 Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire
 Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit
 Bird-like about his brow?

Druses. We saw — we heard !
 Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,
 The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies !
Kha. And as he said hath not our Khalif done,
 And so disposed events (from land to land
 Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
 The pact of villany complete, there comes
 This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect
 Their treason to consummate, — each will face
 For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation ;
 For simulated Christians, confessed Druses ;
 And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
 Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag ;
 That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foe,
 Grants us from Candia escort home at price
 Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts her own —
 Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
 Toward the harbor : is it now that you, and you,
 And you, selected from the rest to bear
 The burden of the Khalif's secret, further
 To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
 And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate —
 That you dare clutch these gauds ? Ay, drop them !

Kar.
 Most true, all this ; and yet, may one dare hint,
 Thou art the youngest of us ? — though employed
 Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
 Transmitter of his mandates, even now.
 Much less, whene'er beside him Anael graces
 The cedar throne, his queen-bride, art thou like
 To occupy its lowest step that day !
 Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspirest,
 Forbidden such or such an honor, — say,
 Would silence serve so amply ?

Kha. Karshook thinks
 I covet honors ? Well, nor idly thinks !
 Honors ? I have demanded of them all
 The greatest !

True,

Kar. I supposed so.

Kha. Judge yourselves !

Turn, thus : 't is in the alcove at the back
Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now
The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state,
Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,
The other lands from Syria ; there they meet.
Now, I have sued with earnest prayers . . .

Kar. For what

Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue ?

Kha. That mine —

Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs
— Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there !
Djabal reserves that office for himself. [A silence.
Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak
— Scarce more enlightened than yourselves ; since, near
As I approach him, nearer as I trust
Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
Only the God's power, not the glory yet.
Therefore I reasoned with you : now, as servant
To Djabal, bearing his authority,
Hear me appoint your several posts ! Till noon
None see him save myself and Anael : once
The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes ! — without a
sign

That he suspects aught since he left our Isle ;
Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence : so have we learned
From Loys.

Kar. Loys ? Is not Loys gone
Forever ?

Ayyoub. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned ?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the leading prow
Conspicuous in his gay attire, and leapt
Into the surf the foremost. Since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward ; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal !

Kha. Peace !

Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive
The Prefect as appointed : see, all keep
The wonted show of servitude : announce

His entry here by the accustomed peal
 Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure
 Of Djabal! (Loys back, whom Djabal sent
 To Rhodes that we might spare the single Knight
 Worth sparing!)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first! Say, I
 First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South!
 Said'st thou a Crossed-keys' flag would flap the mast?
 It nears apace! One galley and no more.
 If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
 Forget not, I it was!

Khu. Thou, Ayoob, bring
 The Nuncio and his followers hither! Break
 One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
 Die at your fault!

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see home!
 — Shall banquet in the sombre groves again!
 Hail to thee, Khalil! Venice looms afar;
 The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
 Bear up from Candia in the distance!

Kha. Joy!
 Summon our people, Raghib! Bid all forth!
 Tell them the long-kept secret, old and young!
 Set free the captives, let the trampled raise
 Their faces from the dust, because at length
 The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign
 Begins anew! Say, Venice for our guard,
 Ere night we steer for Syria! Hear you, Druses?
 Hear you this crowning witness to the claims
 Of Djabal? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
 Reward and punishment, because he bade
 Who has the right; for me, what should I say
 But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
 No majesty of all that rapt regard
 Vex by the least omission! Let him rise
 Without a check from you!

Druses.

Let Djabal rise!

Enter Loys. — The Druses are silent.

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal? — for I seek him, friends!
 [*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu!* 'T is as our Isle broke out in song
 For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
 To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!
 But no — they cannot dream of their good fortune!
 [*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses! I have tidings for you,

But first for Djabal: where's your tall bewitcher,
With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-mouth?

Kha. [*Aside to KAR*] Loys, in truth! Yet Djabal cannot
err

Kar. [*to KHA.*] And who takes charge of Loys? That's
forgotten.

Despite thy wariness! Will Loys stand
And see his comrades slaughtered?

Loys. [*Aside.*] How they shrink
And whisper, with those rapid faces! What?
The sight of me in their oppressors' garb
Strikes terror to the simple tribe? God's shame
On those that bring our Order ill repute!
But all 's at end now; better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from over-sea:

The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus! [*Aloud.*] I asked for Djabal —

Kar. [*Aside.*] Better

One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside
The corridor: 't were easy to dispatch
A youngster. [*To LOYS.*] Djabal passed some minutes since
Through yonder porch, and . . .

Kha. [*Aside.*] Hold! What, him dispatch?
The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon? Who, — noblest Knight
Of all that learned from time to time their trade
Of lust and cruelty among us, — heir
To Europe's pomp, a truest child of pride, —
Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves
From the beginning? Loys, Djabal makes
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety? — I take charge of him!

[*To LOYS.*] Sir Loys, —

Loys. There, cousins! Does Sir Loys strike you dead?

Kha. [*advancing.*] Djabal has intercourse with few or none
Till noontide: but, your pleasure?

Loys. "Intercourse
With few or none?" — (Ah Khalil, when you spoke
I saw not your smooth face! All health! — and health
To Anael! How fares Anael?) — "Intercourse
With few or none?" Forget you, I've been friendly
With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?
— Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath
The Duke my father's roof! He'd tell by the hour,
With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,
Plausiblest stories . . .

Kha. Stories, say you? — Ah,
The quaint attire!

Loys. My dress for the last time!
How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what 's best and oldest there,
See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the Nuncio
Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day!

Kha. The Nuncio we await? What brings you back
From Rhodes, Sir Loys?

Loys. How you island-tribe
Forget the world awake while here you drowse!
What brings me back? What should not bring me, rather?
Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day —
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.

Kha. What 's that you wear?

Loys. This Rhodian cross? The cross your Prefect wore.
You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter
Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool —
My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight ere eve
Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth
To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)
— Change this gay weed for the black white-crossed gown,
And fight to death against the Infidel
— Not, therefore, against you, you Christians with
Such partial difference only as befits
The peace fullest of tribes! But Khalil, prithee,
Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?

Kha. Ah, the new sword!

Loys. See now! You handle sword
As 't were a camel-staff! Pull! That's my motto,
Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.

Kha. No curve in it? Surely a blade should curve!

Loys. Straight from the wrist! Loose — it should poise itself!

Kha. [*waving with irrepressible exultation the sword.*] We
are a nation, Loys, of old fame
Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep
With the sword too!
[*Remembering himself.*] But I forget — you bid me
Seek Djabal?

Loys. What! A sword's sight scares you not?

(The People I will make of him and them !

Oh let my Prefect-way begin at once !)

Bring Djabal — say, indeed, that come he must !

Khal. At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's Chamber,
And find . . . [*Aside.*] Nay, 'tis thy cursed race's token,

Frank pride, no special insolence of thine !

[*Aloud.*] Tarry, and I will do your bidding, Loys !

[*To the rest aside.*] Now, forth you ! I proceed to Djabal
straight.

Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says !

Oh will it not add joy to even thy joy,

Djabal, that I report all friends were true ?

[*KHALIL goes, followed by the Druses.*

Loys. *Tu Dieu !* How happy I shall make these Druses !

Was 't not surpassingly contrived of me

To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,

Then take the first pretence for stealing off

From these poor islanders, present myself

Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,

And (as best proof of ardor in its cause

Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)

Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,

This Prefect and his villanous career ?

The princely Synod ! All I dared request

Was his dismissal ; and they graciously

Consigned his very office to myself —

Myself may cure the Isle diseased !

And well

For them, they did so ! Since I never felt

How lone a lot, though brilliant, I embrace,

Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine.

To live thus, and thus die ! Yet, as I leapt

On shore, so home a feeling greeted me

That I could half believe in Djabal's story,

He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes —

And me, too, since the story brought me here —

Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours

Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,

Left his old name in Lebanon.

Long days

At least to spend in the Isle ! and, my news known

An hour hence, what if Anael turn on me

The great black eyes I must forget ?

Why, fool,

Recall them, then ? My business is with Djabal,

Not Anael ! Djabal tarries : if I see't him ? —

The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day !

ACT II.

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. That a strong man should think himself a God !
I — Hakeem ? To have wandered through the world,
Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn, now faith,
For my one chant with many a change, my tale
Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance — this
Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,
Nor less than Hakeem's ? The persuading Loys
To pass probation here ; the getting access
By Loys to the Prefect ; worst of all,
The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud
That would disgrace the very Frank. — a few
Of Europe's secrets which subdue the flame,
The wave, — to ply a simple tribe with these,
Took Hakeem ?

And I feel this first to-day !
Does the day break, is the hour imminent
When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed
Must be accomplished ? Hakeem ? Why the God ?
Shout, rather, " Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain
With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect
Endeavored to extirpate — saved, a child,
Returns from traversing the world, a man,
Able to take revenge, lead back the march
To Lebanon " — so shout, and who gainsays ?
But now, because delusion mixed itself
Insensibly with this career, all's changed !
Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy ?
" True — but my jugglings wrought that ! " Put I heart
Into our people where no heart lurked ? — " Ah,
What cannot an impostor do ! "

Not this !

Not do this which I do ! Not bid, avaunt
Falsehood ! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me !
— Nor even get a hold on me ! 'T is now —
This day — hour — minute — 't is as here I stand
On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
That I am found deceiving and deceived !
And now what do I ? — hasten to the few
Deceived, ere they deceive the many — shout,
" As I professed, I did believe myself !
Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery —

If Ayoub, Karshook saw — Maani there
 Must tell you how I saw my father sink ;
 My mother's arms twine still about my neck ;
 I hear my brother shriek, here's yet the scar
 Of what was meant for my own death-blow — say,
 If you had woke like me, grown year by year
 Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
 Would it be wondrous such delusion grew ?
 I walked the world, asked help at every hand ;
 Came help or no ? Not this and this ? Which helps
 When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
 The Druses here, all here, but Hakeem's self,
 The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
 Reserved for such a juncture, — could I call
 My mission aught but Hakeem's ? Promised Hakeem
 More than performs the Djabal — you absolve ?
 — Me, you will never shame before the crowd
 Yet happily ignorant ? — Me, both throngs surround
 The few deceived, the many unabused,
 — Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them
 The Prefect, lead to Lebanon ? No Khalif,
 But Sheikh once more ! Mere Djabal — not " . . .

Enter KHALIL hastily.

Kha.

— God Hakeem !

'T is told ! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,
 As we ! and mothers lift on high their babes
 Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,
 Thou hast not failed us ; ancient brows are proud !
 Our elders could not earlier die, it seems,
 Than at thy coming ! The Druse heart is thine !
 Take it ! my lord and theirs, be thou adored !

Dja. [*Aside.*] Adored ! — but I renounce it utterly !

Kha. Already are they instituting choirs

And dances to the Khalif, as of old

'T is chronicled thou bad'st them.

Dja. [*Aside.*]

I abjure it !

'T is not mine — not for me !

Kha.

Why pour they wine
 Flavored like honey and bruised mountain-herbs,
 Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit ?
 Oh, let me tell thee — Esaad, we supposed
 Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
 The last sun rise on the Isle : he can see now !
 The shamed Druse women never wept before :
 They can look up when we reach home, they say.
 Smell ! — sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long —

'sweet! — it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
 Alone do nothing for thee! 'T is my office
 Just to announce what well thou know'st — but thus
 Thou bidst me. At this self-same moment tend
 The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
 Hither by their three sea-paths: nor forget
 Who were the trusty watchers! — thou forget?
 Like me, who do forget that Anael bade . . .

Dja. [*Aside.*] Ay, Anael, Anael — is that said at last?
 Louder than all that would be said. I knew!
 What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
 To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
 On went I, solely for my people's sake:
 I saw her, and I then first saw myself,
 And slackened pace: "if I should prove indeed
 Hakeem — with Anael by!"

Kha. [*Aside.*] Ah, he is rapt!
 Dare I at such a moment break on him
 Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:
 The eyes are Djabal's and not Hakeem's yet,
 Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.
Dja. [*Aside.*] To yearn to tell her, and yet have no one
 Great heart's word that will tell her! I could gasp
 Doubtless one such word out, and die.

[*Aloud.*] You said

That Anael . . .

Kha. . . . Fain would see thee, speak with thee,
 Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape
 She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know.
 Something to say that will not from her mind!
 I know not what — "Let him but come!" she said.

Dja. [*Half apart.*] My nation — all my Druses — how fare
 they?

Those I must save, and suffer thus to save.
 Told they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?

Kha. All at the signal pant to flock around
 That banner of a brow!

Dja. [*Aside.*] And when they flock,
 Confess them this: and after, for reward,
 Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance!
 — Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,
 Precede me there, forestall my story there,
 Tell it in mocks and jeers!

I lose myself!
 Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?
 I need the veriest child — why not this child?

[*Turning abruptly to KHALIL.*

You are a Druse too, Khalil ; you were nourished
 Like Anael with our mysteries : if she
 Could vow, so nourished, to love only one
 Who should avenge the Druses, whence proceeds
 Your silence ? Wherefore made you no essay,
 Who thus implicitly can execute
 My bidding ? What have I done, you could not ?
 Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration
 Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
 Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,
 This Prefect ? All 's in readiness ?

Kha. The sword,
 The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,
 Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
 The Prefect's chamber.

Dja. — Why did you despair ?

Kha. I know our nation's state ? Too surely know,
 As thou who speak'st to prove me ! Wrongs like ours
 Should wake revenge : but when I sought the wronged
 And spoke, — "The Prefect stabbed your son — arise !
 Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless bread
 In his pavilion — then arise !" — my speech
 Fell idly — 't was, "Be silent, or worse fare !
 Endure till time's slow cycle prove complete !
 Who may'st thou be that takest on thee to thrust
 Into this peril — art thou Hakeem ?" No !
 Only a mission like thy mission renders
 All these obedient at a breath, subdues
 Their private passions, brings their wills to one !

Dja. You think so ?

Kha. Even now — when they have witnessed
 Thy miracles — had I not threatened all
 With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the work,
 And couch ere this, each with his special prize,
 Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope
 To perish ! No ! When these have kissed thy feet
 At Lebanon, the past purged off, the present
 Clear, — for the future, even Hakeem's mission
 May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
 Shall rule them thus renewed. — I talk to thee !

Dja. And wisely. He is Anael's brother, pure
 As Anael's self. Go say, I come to her.
 Haste ! I will follow you.

[KHALIL goes.]

Oh, not confess
 To these, the blinded multitude — confess,

Before at least the fortune of my deed
 Half authorize its means! Only to her
 Let me confess my fault, who in my path
 Curled up like incense from a mage-king's tomb
 When he would have the wayfarer descend
 Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure forth!
 When should my first child's-carelessness have stopped
 If not when I, whose lone youth hurried past,
 Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,
 At length recovered in one Druse all joy?
 Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
 Would I confess! On the gulf's verge I pause.
 How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?
 Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy! [Goes.
*Enter ANAEL, and MAANI who is assisting to array her in the ancient
 dress of the Druses.*

An. Those saffron vestures of the tabret-girls!
 Comes Djabal, think you?

Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.

An. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,
 Than in my dreams? — Nay, all the tresses off
 My forehead! Look I lovely so? He says
 That I am lovely.

Maa. Lovely: nay, that hangs
 Awry.

An. You tell me how a khandjar hangs?
 The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
 The maiden of our class. Are you content
 For Djabal as for me?

Maa. Content, my child.

An. Oh mother, tell me more of him! He comes
 Even now — tell more, fill up my soul with him!

Maa. And did I not . . . yes, surely . . . tell you all?

An. What will be changed in Djabal when the Change
 Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!

Maa. 'Tis writ
 Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
 Superbly.

An. Not his eyes! His voice perhaps?
 Yet that's no change; for a grave current lived
 — Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
 That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray
 While . . . ah, the bliss . . . he would discourse to me
 In that enforced still fashion, word on word!
 'Tis the old current which must swell through that,
 For what least tone, Maani, could I lose?

'Tis surely not his voice will change !

— If Hakeem

Only stood by ! If Djabal, somehow, passed

Out of the radiance as from out a robe ;

Possessed, but was not it !

He lived with you ?

Well — and that morning Djabal saw me first

And heard me vow never to wed but one

Who saved my People — on that day . . . proceed !

Maa. Once more, then : from the time of his return

In secret, changed so since he left the Isle

That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,

This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre

— Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,

— Who dreamed so long the youth he might become —

I knew not in the man that child ; the man

Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,

How he had gone from land to land to save

Our tribe — allies were sure, nor foes to dread ;

And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused :

But never till that day when, pale and worn

As by a persevering woe, he cried

"Is there not one Druse left me ?" — and I showed

The way to Khalil's and your hiding-place

From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,

So that he saw you, heard you speak — till then,

Never did he announce — (how the moon seemed

To ope and shut, the while, above us both !)

— His mission was the mission promised us ;

The cycle had revolved ; all things renewing,

He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead

His children home anon, now veiled to work

Great purposes : the Druses now would change !

An. And they have changed ! And obstacles did sink,

And furtherances rose ! And round his form

Played fire, and music beat her angel wings !

My people, let me more rejoice, oh more

For you than for myself ! Did I but watch

Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,

One of the throng, how proud were I — though ne'er

Singled by Djabal's glance ! But to be chosen

His own from all, the most his own of all,

To be exalted with him, side by side.

Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how

Worthily meet the maidens who await

Ever beneath the cedars — how deserve.

This honor, in their eyes? So bright are they
 Who saffron-vested sound the tabret there,
 The girls who throng there in my dream! One hour
 And all is over : how shall I do aught
 That may deserve next hour's exalting? — How? —

[Suddenly to MAANI.

Mother, I am not worthy him! I read it
 Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me
 I am not, yet forbears. Why else revert
 To one theme ever? — how mere human gifts
 Suffice him in myself — whose worship fades,
 Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
 As now, who when he comes . . .
 [DJABAL enters.] Oh why is it
 I cannot kneel to you?

Dja. Rather, 't is I
 Should kneel to you, my Anael!

An. Even so!
 For never seem you — shall I speak the truth? —
 Never a God to me! 'T is the Man's hand,
 Eye, voice! Oh do you veil these to our people,
 Or but to me? To them. I think, to them!
 And brightness is their veil, shadow — my truth!
 You mean that I should never kneel to you
 — So I will kneel!

Dja. [preventing her.] No — no!

[Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.

Ha, have you chosen . . .

An. The khandjar with our ancient garb. But, Djabal,
 Change not, be not exalted yet! Give time
 That I may plan more, perfect more! My blood
 Beats, beats!

[Aside.] Oh must I then — since Loys leaves us
 Never to come again, renew in me
 These doubts so near effaced already — must
 I needs confess them now to Djabal? — own
 That when I saw that stranger, heard his voice,
 My faith fell, and the woful thought flashed first
 That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken
 For proof of more than human attributes
 In him, by me whose heart at his approach
 Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
 Whose soul at his departure died away,
 — That every such effect might have been wrought
 In other frames, though not in mine, by Loys
 Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt

Is fading fast ; shall I reveal it now ?
 How shall I meet the rapture presently,
 With doubt unexpiated. undisclosed ?

Dja. [*Aside.*] Avow the truth ? I cannot ! In what words
 Avow that all she loved in me was false ?

— Which yet has served that flower-like love of hers
 To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp
 With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.

Could I take down the prop-work, in itself
 So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
 With painted cups and fruitage — might these still
 Bask in the sun, unconscious their own strength
 Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
 The old support thus silently withdrawn !

But no ; the beauteous fabric crushes too.

'T is not for my sake but for Anael's sake
 I leave her soul this Hakeem where it leans !

Oh could I vanish from her — quit the Isle !

And yet — a thought comes : here my work is done

At every point ; the Druses must return —

Have convoy to their birth-place back, whoe'er

The leader be, myself or any Druse —

Venice is pledged to that : 't is for myself,

For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,

I stay now, not for them : to slay or spare

The Prefect, whom imports it save myself ?

He cannot bar their passage from the Isle ;

What would his death be but my own reward ?

Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone !

Let him escape with all my House's blood !

Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,

And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,

Live in her memory, keeping her sublime

Above the world. She cannot touch that world

By ever knowing what I truly am,

Since Loys, — of mankind the only one

Able to link my present with my past,

My life in Europe with my Island life,

Thence, able to unmask me, — I've disposed

Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Kha. Loys greets thee !

Dja. Loys ? To drag me back ? It cannot be !

An. [*Aside.*] Loys ! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so !

Kha. Can I have erred that thou so gazest ? Yes,
 I told thee not in the glad press of tidings

Of higher import, Loys is returned
 Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
 Twice the light-heartedness of old. As though
 On some inauguration he expects,
 To-day, the world's fate hung!

Dja. — And asks for me?

Kha. Thou knowest all things! Thee in chief he greets,
 But every Druse of us is to be happy
 At his arrival, he declares: were Loys
 Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
 To take us in with. How I love that Loys!

Dja. [*Aside.*] Shame winds me with her tether round and round!

An. [*Aside.*] Loys? I take the trial! it is meet,
 The little I can do, be done; that faith,
 All I can offer, want no perfecting
 Which my own act may compass. Ay, this way
 All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
 Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance
 Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
 The mortal with the more than mortal gifts!

Dja. [*Aside.*] Before, there were so few deceived! and now

There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle
 But, having learned my superhuman claims,
 And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash
 The whole truth out from Loys at first word!
 While Loys, for his part, will hold me up,
 With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
 Of such imposture, to my people's eyes!
 Could I but keep him longer yet awhile
 From them, amuse him here until I plan
 How he and I at once may leave the Isle!
 Khalil I cannot part with from my side —
 My only help in this emergency:
 There's Anael!

An. Please you?

Dja. Anael — none but she!

[*To ANAEL.*] I pass some minutes in the chamber there,
 Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with him
 Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

An. [*Aside.*] As I divined: he bids me save myself,
 Offers me a probation — I accept!
 Let me see Loys!

Loys. [*Without.*] Djabal!

An. [*Aside.*] 'T is his voice.

The smooth Frank trifter with our people's wrongs,
 The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
 On this and that inflicted tyranny,
 — Aught serving to parade an ignorance
 Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me close
 With what I viewed at distance: let myself
 Probe this delusion to the core!

Dja.

He comes.

Khalil, along with me! while Anael waits
 Till I return once more — and but once more!

ACT III.

ANAEL and LOYS.

An. Here leave me! Here I wait another. 'T was
 For no mad protestation of a love
 Like this you say possesses you, I came.

Loys. Love? how protest a love I dare not feel?
 Mad words may doubtless have escaped me: you
 Are here — I only feel you here!

An.

No more!

Loys. But once again, whom could you love? I dare,
 Alas, say nothing of myself. who am
 A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,
 Love we abjure: so, speak on safely: speak,
 Lest I speak, and betray my faith! And yet
 To say your breathing passes through me, changes
 My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
 As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it —
 This is not to protest my love! You said
 You could love one . . .

An.

One only! We are bent
 To earth — who raises up my tribe, I love;
 The Prefect bows us — who removes him; we
 Have ancient rights — who gives them back to us,
 I love. Forbear me! Let my hand go!

Loys.

Him

You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!
 [*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this but myself?
 Had I apprised her that I come to do
 Just this, what more could she acknowledge? No,
 She sees into my heart's core! What is it
 Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose?
 Why turns she from me? Ah fool, over-fond

To dream I could call up . . .

. . . What never dream
Yet feigned ! 'Tis love ! Oh Anael, speak to me !

Djabal —

An. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's chamber

At noon !

[She paces the room.]

Loys. [Aside.] And am I not the Prefect now ?

Is it my fate to be the only one

Able to win her love, the only one

Unable to accept her love ? The past

Breaks up beneath my footing : came I here

This morn as to a slave, to set her free

And take her thanks, and then spend day by day

Content beside her in the Isle ? What works

This knowledge in me now ? Her eye has broken

The faint disguise away : for Anael's sake

I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause

Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,

To live without !

— As I must live ! To-day

Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . . never shall

Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,

Thy soldier !

An. Djabal you demanded, comes !

Loys. [Aside.] What wouldst thou, Loys ? See him ? Nought
beside

Is wanting : I have felt his voice a spell

From first to last. He brought me here, made known

The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek

Redress for them ; and shall I meet him now,

When nought is wanting but a word of his,

To — what ? — induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,

Honor away, — to cast my lot among

His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,

Breaking my high pact of companionship

With those who graciously bestowed on me

The very opportunities I turn

Against them ! Let me not see Djabal now !

An. The Prefect also comes !

Loys. [Aside.] Him let me see,

Not Djabal ! Him, degraded at a word,

To soothe me, — to attest belief in me —

And after, Djabal ! Yes, ere I return

To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed

This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will

Forever.

Anael, not before the vows
Irrevocably fix me . . .

Let me fly!

The Prefect, or I lose myself forever!

[Goes.

An. Yes, I am calm now; just one way remains —
One, to attest my faith in him: for, see,
I were quite lost else: Loys, Djabal, stand
On either side — two men! I balance looks
And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed!
And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride? One way! —

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. [to himself.] No moment is to waste then; 'tis resolved.
If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
My Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle — if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least, —
All's over. Even now my bark awaits:
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun forever.
And now, to Anael!

An. Djabal, I am thine!

Dja. Mine? Djabal's? — As if Hakeem had not been?

An. Not Djabal's? Say first, do you read my thought?
Why need I speak, if you can read my thought?

Dja. I do not, I have said a thousand times.

An. (My secret's safe, I shall surprise him yet!)

Djabal, I knew your secret from the first:
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck — I see!)
. . . I knew you were not human, for I said
"This dim secluded house where the sea beats
Is heaven to me — my people's huts are hell
To them; this august form will follow me,
Mix with the waves his voice will, — I have him;
And they, the Prefect! Oh, my happiness
Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!
His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
His hand grew damp — surely he meant to say
He let me love him: in that moment's bliss
I shall forget my people pine for home —
They pass and they repass with pallid eyes!"
I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow —
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
Embrace me!

Dja. [*Apert.*] And she loved me! Nought remained
But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead?

An. Ah, you reproach me! True, his death crowns all,
I know — or should know: and I would do much,
Believe! but, death! Oh, you, who have known death,
Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful
As we report!

Death! — a fire curls within us
From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,
Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
Of flesh, perchance!

Death! — witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to die
For Khalil, for Maani — what for thee?
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance
My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy you!

Dja. [*avoiding her.*] I come for that — to say
Such an occasion is at hand: 't is like
I leave you — that we part, my Anael, — part
Forever!

An. We part? Just so! I have succumbed, —
I am, he thinks, unworthy — and nought less
Will serve than such approval of my faith.
Then, we part not! Remains there no way short
Of that? Oh not that!

Death! — yet a hurt bird
Died in my hands; its eyes filmed — “Nay, it sleeps,”
I said, “will wake to-morrow well:” 't was dead.

Dja. I stand here and time fleets. Anael — I come
To bid a last farewell to you: perhaps
We never meet again. But, ere the Prefect
Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL, breathlessly.

Kha. He's here! The Prefect! Twenty guards,
No more — no sign he dreams of danger. All
Awaits thee only. Ayooob, Karshook, keep
Their posts — wait but the deed's accomplishment
To join us with thy Druses to a man!
Still holds his course the Nuncio — near and near
The fleet from Candia steering!

Dja. [*Aside.*] All is lost!
— Or won?

Kha. And I have laid the sacred robe,
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch — the place
Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.

Dja. Then I keep Anael, — him then, past recall,
I slay — 't is forced on me! As I began
I must conclude — so be it!

Kha. For the rest,
Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword,
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat
Thy post again of thee: though danger none,
There must be glory only meet for thee
In slaying the Prefect!

An. [*Aside.*] And 't is now that Djabal
Would leave me! — in the glory meet for him!

Dja. As glory, I would yield the deed to you
Or any Druse; what peril there may be,
I keep. [*Aside.*] All things conspire to hound me on!
Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!
The course is plain, howe'er obscure all else.
Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, regain
The Cedars — then let all dark clear itself!
I slay him!

Kha. Anael, and no part for us!
[*To Dja.*] Hast thou possessed her with . . .

Dja. [*to An.*] Whom speak you to?
What is it you behold there? Nay, this smile
Turns stranger. Shudder you? The man must die,
As thousands of our race have died through him.
One blow, and I discharge his weary soul
From the flesh that pollutes it! Let him fill
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
Or sea, the reptile or some æry thing:
What is there in his death?

An. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us?

Dja. For Khalil, —
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry;
Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him — here
I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayoob leads
The Nuncio with his guards within: once these
Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
Entry or egress till I give the sign
Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me: this double sign
That justice is performed and help arrived,
When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,

Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
 The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
 We leave forever this detested spot.
 Go, Khalil, hurry all! No pause, no pause!
 Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

Kha. What sign? and who the bearer?

Dja.

Who shall show

My ring, admit to Ayoob. How she stands!
 Have I not . . . I must have some task for her.
 Anael, not that way! 'Tis the Prefect's chamber!
 Anael, keep you the ring — give you the sign!
 (It holds her safe amid the stir.) You will
 Be faithful?

An. [*taking the ring.*] I would fain be worthy of you!

[*Trumpet without.*]

Kha. He comes!

Dja.

And I too come!

An.

One word, but one!

Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?

Then? On the instant?

Dja.

I exalted? What?

He, there — we, thus — our wrongs revenged, our tribe
 Set free? Oh, then shall I, assure yourself,
 Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
 Exalted!

Kha. He is here!

Dja.

Away — away!

[*They go.*]

Enter the PREFECT with Guards, and LOYS.

The Prefect [*to Guards.*] Back, I say, to the galley every
 guard!

That's my sole care now; see each bench retains

Its complement of rowers; I embark

O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.

Alas me! Could you have the heart, my Loys?

[*To a Guard who whispers.*] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio here
 forthwith!

[*The Guards go.*]

Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see

The gray discarded Prefect leave his post,

With tears i' the eye! So, you are Prefect now?

You depose me — you succeed me? Ha, ha!

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter less becomes
 Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . . .

Pref. — When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,
 For my dismissal from the post? — Ah, meek
 With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!

And wish him the like meekness : for so stanch
 A servant of the church can scarce have bought
 His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces !
 You 've my successor to condole with, Nuncio !
 I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys !

Loys. You make as you would tell me you rejoice
 To leave your scene of . . .

Pref. Trade in the dear Druses ?
 Blood and sweat traffic ? Spare what yesterday
 We had enough of ! Drove I in the Isle
 A profitable game ? Learn wit, my son,
 Which you 'll need shortly ! Did it never breed
 Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
 When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth — was bent
 On having a partaker in my rule ?
 Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
 If not that I might also shift — what on him ?
 Half of the peril, Loys !

Loys. Peril ?

Pref. Hark you !
 I 'd love you if you 'd let me — this for reason,
 You save my life at price of . . . well, say risk
 At least, of yours. I came a long time since
 To the Isle ; our Hospitallers bade me tame
 These savage wizards, and reward myself —

Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime ?

Pref. Loys, the Knights ! we doubtless understood
 Each other ; as for trusting to reward
 From any friend beside myself . . . no, no !
 I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,
 And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
 Alive — was sure they were not on me, only
 When I was on them : but with age comes caution :
 And stinging pleasures please less and sting more,
 Year by year, fear by fear ! The girls were brighter
 Than ever ('faith, there 's yet one Anael left,
 I set my heart upon — Oh, prithee, let
 That brave new sword lie still !) — These joys looked brighter,
 But silenter the town, too, as I passed.
 With this alcove's delicious memories
 Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
 Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,
 Stealing to catch me : brief, when I began
 To quake with fear — (I think I hear the Chapter
 Solicited to let me leave, now all
 Worth staying for was gained and gone !) — I say,

Just when for the remainder of my life
 All methods of escape seemed lost — that then
 Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
 Talk very long and loud, — in fine, compel
 The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
 Home for pure shame — from this safehold of mine
 Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
 To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
 By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,
 Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
 Are all I have to guard me, — that such fortune
 Should fall to me, I hardly could expect!
 Therefore I say, I'd love you!

Loys. Can it be?

I play into your hands then? Oh no, no!
 The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
 Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit?
 But I will back — will yet unveil you!

Pref. Me?

To whom? — perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter
 Shook his white head thrice — and some dozen times
 My hand next morning shook, for value paid!
 To that Italian saint, Sir Cosimo? —
 Indignant at my wringing year by year
 A thousand bezants from the coral divers,
 As you recounted; felt the saint aggrieved?
 Well might he — I allowed for his half-share
 Merely one hundred! To Sir . . .

Loys. See! you dare

Inculcate the whole Order; yet should I,
 A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change
 Their evil way, had they been firm in it?
 Answer me!

Pref. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
 And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,
 And the young arm, we'll even say, my Loys,
 — The fear of losing or diverting these
 Into another channel, by gainsaying
 A novice too abruptly, could not influence
 The Order! You might join, for aught they cared,
 Their red-cross rivals of the Temple! Well,
 I thank you for my part, at all events.
 Stay here till they withdraw you! You'll inhabit
 My palace — sleep, perchance, in the alcove
 Whither I go to meet our holy friend.
 Good! and now disbelieve me if you can, —

This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I lifted
The lid up of my tomb.

Loys. They share his crime !
God's punishment will overtake you yet.

Pref. Thank you it does not ! Pardon this last flash :
I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here —
His purchase-money safe at Murcia, too !
Let me repeat — for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.
When we next meet, this folly may have passed,
We'll hope. Ha, ha ! [*Goes through the arras.*]

Loys. Assure me but . . . he's gone !
He could not lie. Then what have I escaped,
I, who had so nigh given up happiness
Forever, to be linked with him and them !
Oh, opportunist of discoveries ! I
Their Knight ? I utterly renounce them all !
Hark ! What, he meets by this the Nuncio ? yes,
The same hyæna groan-like laughter ! Quick —
To Djabal ! I am one of them at last,
These simple-hearted Druses — Anael's tribe !
Djabal ! She's mine at last. Djabal, I say ! [*Goes.*]

ACT IV.

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. Let me but slay the Prefect. The end now !
To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took : suffice, they served,
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object. [*Seeing the robe, etc. disposed.*]

Mine should never so
Have hurried to accomplishment ! Thee, Djabal,
Far other mood befitted ! Calm the Robe
Should clothe this doom's awarder !

[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe ? I am at least
A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me : I dare take the Robe. Why not
The Tiar ? I rule the Druses, and what more
Betokens it than rule ? — yet — yet —

[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes ! [*Lays down the tiar.*
[*Taking the sword.*]

If the Sword serve, let the Tiar lie! So, feet
 Clogged with the blood of twenty years can fall
 Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts! He'll lift . . .
 Which arm to push the arras wide? — or both?
 Stab from the neck down to the heart — there stay!
 Near he comes — nearer — the next footstep! Now!

[*As he dashes aside the arras, ANAEL is discovered.*]

Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?
 Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,
 And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?
 Anael, the Prefect comes! [ANAEEL screams.] So slow to feel
 'T is not a sight for you to look upon?
 A moment's work — but such work! Till you go,
 I must be idle — idle, I risk all!

[*Pointing to her hair.*]

Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,
 But with the dagger 't is, I have to do!

An. With mine!

Dja. Blood — Anael?

An. Djabal, 't is thy deed!

It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine —
 Be worthy thee — but I must needs confess
 'T was not I, but thyself . . . not I have . . . Djabal!
 Speak to me!

Dja. Oh, my punishment!

An. Speak to me

While I can speak! touch me, despite the blood!
 When the command passed from thy soul to mine,
 I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,
 And the approaching exaltation, — “make
 One sacrifice!” I said, — and he sat there,
 Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,
 Thy fire with music burst into my brain:
 'T was but a moment's work, thou saidst — perchance
 It may have been so! Well, it is thy deed!

Dja. It is my deed!

An. His blood all this! — this! and . . .

And more! Sustain me, Djabal! Wait not — now
 Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!
 It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!
 At least confirm me! Djabal, blood gushed forth —
 He was our tyrant — but I looked he'd fall
 Prone as asleep — why else is death called sleep?
 Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'T is sin, I know, —
 Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?
 Be it thou that punishest, not he — who creeps

On his red breast — is here! 'T is the small groan
Of a child — no worse! Bestow the new life, then!
Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing!

[*Following him up and down.*]

Now! Change us both! Change me and change thou!

Dja. [*sinks on his knees.*]

Thus!

Behold my change! You have done nobly! I! —

An. Can Hakeem kneel?

Dja.

No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal!

I have spoken falsely, and this woe is come.

No — hear me ere scorn blast me! Once and ever,

The deed is mine! Oh think upon the past!

An. [*to herself.*] Did I strike once, or twice, or many times?

Dja. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,

Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep:

Anael, I saw my tribe; I said, "Without

A miracle this cannot be" — I said

"Be there a miracle!" — for I saw you!

An. His head lies south the portal!

Dja.

— Weighed with this

The general good, how could I choose my own?

What matter was my purity of soul?

Little by little I engaged myself —

Heaven would accept me for its instrument,

I hoped: I said Heaven had accepted me!

An. Is it this blood breeds dreams in me? — Who said

You were not Hakeem? And your miracles —

The fire that plays innocuous round your form?

[*Again changing her whole manner.*]

Ah, thou wouldst try me — thou art Hakeem still!

Dja. Woe — woe! As if the Druses of the Mount

(Scarce Arabs, even there, but here, in the Isle,

Beneath their former selves) should comprehend

The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets

That would not easily affect the meanest

Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate

The best of our poor tribe! Again that eye?

An. [*after a pause springs to his neck.*] Djabal, in this
there can be no deceit!

Why, Djabal, were you human only, — think,

Maani is but human, Khalil human,

Loys is human even — did their words

Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you

So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me

So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect

And the blood, there — could I see only you?

— Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?
 Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

[As DJABAL slowly unclasps her arms, and puts her silently from
 him.

Hakeem would save me! Thou art Djabal! Crouch!
 Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
 The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud —
 Full, midway, of our fathers' trophied tombs,
 Based on the living rock, devoured not by
 The unstable desert's jaws of sand, — falls prone!
 Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there
 A ruin, obscene creatures will moan through!
 — Let us come, Djabal!

Dja.

Whither come?

An.

At once —

Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!
 Will I not share it with thee? Best at once!
 So, feel less pain! Let them deride, — thy tribe
 Now trusting in thee, — Loys shall deride!
 Come to them, hand in hand, with me!

Dja.

Where come?

An. Where? — to the Druses thou hast wronged! Confess,
 Now that the end is gained — (I love thee now —)
 That thou hast so deceived them — (perchance love thee
 Better than ever!) Come, receive their doom
 Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee!
 Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,
 Be mine! Come!

Dja.

Never! More shame yet? and why?
 Why? You have called this deed mine — it is mine!
 And with it I accept its circumstance.
 How can I longer strive with fate? The past
 Is past: my false life shall henceforth show true.
 Hear me! The argosies touch land by this;
 They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies:
 What if we reign together? — if we keep
 Our secret for the Druses' good? — by means
 Of even their superstition, plant in them
 New life? I learn from Europe: all who seek
 Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.
 We two will be divine to them — we are!
 All great works in this world spring from the ruins
 Of greater projects — ever, on our earth,
 Babels men block out, Babylons they build.
 I wrest the weapon from your hand! I claim
 The deed! Retire! You have my ring — you bar

All access to the Nuncio till the forces
From Venice land !

An. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then ?

Dja. [*putting the Tiara of Hakeem on his head.*] And from
this moment that I dare ope wide
Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
My true dominion : for I know myself,
And what am I to personate. No word ?

[*ANAEL goes.*]

'Tis come on me at last ! His blood on her —
What memories will follow that ! Her eye,
Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black brow !
Ah, fool ! Has Europe then so poorly tamed
The Syrian blood from out thee ? Thou, presume
To work in this foul earth by means not foul ?
Scheme, as for heaven, — but, on the earth, be glad
If a least ray like heaven's be left thee !

Thus

I shall be calm — in readiness — no way
Surprised.

[*A noise without.*]

This should be Khalil and my Druses !
Venice is come then ! Thus I grasp thee, sword !
Druses, 't is Hakeem saves you ! In ! Behold
Your Prefect !

Enter LOYS. *DJABAL hides the khandjar in his robe.*

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal ! — but no time for words.
You know who waits there ?

[*Pointing to the alcove.*]

Well ! — and that 't is there

He meets the Nuncio ? Well ! Now, a surprise —
He there —

Dja. I know —

Loys. — is now no mortal's lord,
Is absolutely powerless — call him, dead —
He is no longer Prefect — you are Prefect !
Oh shrink not ! I do nothing in the dark,
Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe !
I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes ; I felt
What you were loath to speak — your need of help.
I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me ; have, face to face, confronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
The enormities of his long rule : he stood
Mute, offered no defence. no crime denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you urged

Of old to me — I spoke, too, of your goodness,
 Your patience — brief, I hold henceforth the Isle
 In charge, am nominally lord, — but you,
 You are associated in my rule —
 Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith had they
 In my assurance of your loyalty
 (For who insults an imbecile old man?)
 That we assume the Prefecture this hour!
 You gaze at me! Hear greater wonders yet —
 I throw down all the fabric I have built!
 These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . . but
 Of that another time; what's now to say,
 Is — I shall never be a Knight! Oh, Djabal,
 Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
 And call you brother! I am Druse like you!
 My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly yours,
 Your people's, which is now my people: for
 There is a maiden of your tribe, I love —
 She loves me — Khalil's sister —

Dja.

Anael?

Loys.

Start you?

Seems what I say, unknighly? Thus it chanced:
 When first I came, a novice, to the isle . . .

Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards from the alcove.

Guard. Oh horrible! Sir Loys! Here is Loys!

And here —

[Others enter from the alcove.]

[Pointing to DJABAL.] Secure him, bind him — this is he!

[They surround DJABAL.]

Loys. Madmen — what is't you do? Stand from my friend,
 And tell me!

Guard. Thou canst have no part in this —
 Surely no part! But slay him not! The Nuncio
 Commanded, slay him not!

Loys.

Speak, or . . .

Guard.

The Prefect

Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.

Loys. By Djabal? Miserable fools! How Djabal?

[A Guard lifts DJABAL'S robe; DJABAL flings down the khandjar.]

Loys. *[after a pause.]* Thou hast received some insult worse
 than all,

Some outrage not to be endured —

[To the Guards.] Stand back!

He is my friend — more than my friend! Thou hast
 Slain him upon that provocation!

Guard.

No!

No provocation! 'Tis a long devised

Conspiracy : the whole tribe is involved.
 He is their Khalif — 'tis on that pretence —
 Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
 And now comes back to life and light again —
 All is just now revealed, I know not how,
 By one of his confederates — who, struck
 With horror at this murder, first apprised
 The Nuncio. As 't was said, we find this Djabal
 Here where we take him.

Dja. [*Aside.*] Who broke faith with me ?

Loys. [*to DJABAL.*] Hear'st thou ? Speak ! Till thou speak.
 I keep off these,

Or die with thee. Deny this story ! Thou
 A Khalif, an impostor ? Thou, my friend,
 Whose tale was of an inoffensive race,
 With . . . but thou know'st — on that tale's truth I pledged
 My faith before the Chapter : what art thou ?

Dja. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All's true !
 No more concealment ! As these tell thee, all
 Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough
 To crush this handful : the Venetians land
 Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part !
 Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have served me more ;
 It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,
 We are a separated tribe : farewell !

Loys. Oh where will truth be found now ? Canst thou so
 Belie the Druses ? Do they share thy crime ?
 Those thou professest of our Breton stock,
 Are partners with thee ? Why, I saw but now
 Khalil, my friend — he spoke with me — no word
 Of this ! and Anael — whom I love, and who
 Loves me — she spoke no word of this !

Dja. Poor boy !
 Anael, who loves thee ? Khalil, fast thy friend ?
 We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux ?
 No — older than the oldest — princelier
 Than Europe's princeliest tribe are we. Enough
 For thee, that on our simple faith we found
 A monarchy to shame your monarchies
 At their own trick and secret of success.
 The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon
 The palace-step of him whose life ere night
 Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet
 Shall laugh there ! What, we Druses wait forsooth
 The kind interposition of a boy
 — Can only save ourselves if thou concede ?

— Khalil admire thee? He is my right hand,
My delegate! — Anael accept thy love?
She is my bride!

Loys. Thy bride? She one of them?

Dja. My bride!

Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes!
She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!

Ah — who but she directed me to find

Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil

Bade me seek Djabal there, too! All is truth!

What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?

Did the Church ill to institute long since

Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?

And I — have I desired to shift my part,

Evade my share in her design? 'T is well!

Dja. Loys, I have wronged thee — but unwittingly:

I never thought there was in thee a virtue

That could attach itself to what thou deemest

A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,

But that is over: all is over now,

Save the protection I ensure against

My people's anger. By their Khalif's side,

Thou art secure and may'st depart: so, come!

Loys. Thy side? — I take protection at thy hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him! Fly, Sir Loys! 'T is too true!

And only by his side thou may'st escape!

The whole tribe is in full revolt: they flock

About the palace — will be here — on thee —

And there are twenty of us, we the Guards

O' the Nuncio, to withstand them! Even we

Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,

But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,

Made known the horror to the Nuncio. Fly!

The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us

Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem! We are nought

In thy tribe's persecution! [*To Loys.*] Keep by him!

They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince returned:

He is their God, they shout, and at his beck

Are life and death!

[*Loys springing at the khandjar DJABAL had thrown down, seizes him by the throat.*]

Thus by his side am I!

Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare,

Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place!

Thus art thou caught. Without, thy dupes may cluster,

Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee, — thou art Hakeem,
 How say they? — God art thou! but also here
 Is the least, youngest, meanest the Church calls
 Her servant, and his single arm avails
 To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
 Art crushed! Hordes of thy Druses flock without:
 Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,
 Honor and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound and thee!
 Die! [DJABAL *remains calm.*] Implore my mercy, Hakeem,
 that my scorn
 May help me! Nay, I cannot ply thy trade;
 I am no Druse, no stabber: and thine eye,
 Thy form, are too much as they were — my friend
 Had such! Speak! Beg for mercy at my foot!

[DJABAL *still silent.*

Heaven could not ask so much of me — not, sure,
 So much! I cannot kill him so!

 Thou art
 Strong in thy cause, then! — dost outbrave us, then!
 Heardst thou that one of thine accomplices,
 Thy very people, has accused thee? Meet
 His charge! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect
 As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that Druse!
 Come with me and disprove him — be thou tried
 By him, nor seek appeal! Promise me this,
 Or I will do God's office! What, shalt thou
 Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet truth
 Want even an executioner? Consent,
 Or I will strike — look in my face — I will!

Dja. Give me again my khandjar, if thou darest!

[Loys *gives it.*

Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
 This home. A Druse betray me? Let us go!

[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me? [Shouts *without.*

Hearst thou? I hear

No plainer than long years ago I heard
 That shout — but in no dream now! They return!
 Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well!

ACT V.

The uninitiated Druses, filling the hall tumultuously, and speaking together.

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon!

My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there. Come, old Nasif — link thine arm in mine — we fight, if needs be. Come, what is a great fight-word? — “Lebanon?” (My daughter — my daughter!) — But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza? — Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves. Where is Hakeem? — The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth: a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent. Is this he? Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO with Guards.

Nuncio [to his Attendants]. Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice

Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell
Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:
Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed!

Lo, this black disemboing of the Isle!

[To the Druses.] Ah children, what a sight for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage through

To smile their very last on you! I came

To gather one and all you wandering sheep

Into my fold, as though a father came . . .

As though, in coming, a father should . . .

[To his Guards.] (Ten, twelve

— Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None?

The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!)

[To the Druses.] As if one came to a son's house, I say,

So did I come — no guard with me — to find . . .

Alas — alas!

A Druse. Who is the old man?

Another.

Oh, ye are to shout!

Children, he styles you.

Druses.

Ay, the Prefect's slain!

Glory to the Khalif, our Father!

Nuncio.

Even so!

I find, (ye prompt aright) your father slain!

While most he plotted for your good, that father

(Alas, how kind, ye never knew) — lies slain!

[*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave — with me,
For being duped by his cajoleries!

Are these the Christians? These the docile crew

My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?)

[To his Attendants, who whisper.] What say ye does this
wizard style himself?

Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third Fatemite?

What is this jargon? He — the insane Khalif,

Dead near three hundred years ago, come back
In flesh and blood again?

Druses. He mutters! Hear ye?

He is blaspheming Hakcem. The old man
Is our dead Prefect's friend! Tear him!

Nuncio. Ye dare not!

I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,
The Patriarch's power behind me, God's above!
Those years have witnessed sin enough; ere now
Misguided men arose against their lords,
And found excuse; but ye, to be enslaved
By sorceries, cheats — alas! the same tricks, tried
On my poor children in this nook of the earth,
Could triumph, that have been successively
Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through:
“*Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi,*
Cretes and Arabians,” — you are duped the last!
Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye
Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch
That so much love was wasted — every gift
Rejected, from his benison I brought,
Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
An hour since at the harbor's mouth, by that . . .
That . . . never will I speak his hated name!
[*To his Servants.*] What was the name his fellow slip-fetter
Called their arch-wizard by? [*they whisper.*] Oh, Djabal was 't?

Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein?

Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal)

How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .

Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .

What I sailed hither solely to divulge —

How by his spells the demons were allured

To seize you: not that these be aught save lies

And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,

By measures such as these, he would have led you

Into a monstrous ruin: follow ye?

Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?

Druses. Hark ye!

Nuncio. — Be of one privilege amerced?

No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies are!

No! With the Patriarch's license, still I bid

Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are white
fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond what Kar-
shook says; he knows but what Khalil says, who knows just what
Djabal says himself. Now, the little Copht Prophet, I saw at

Cairo in my youth, began by promising each bystander three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL and the initiated Druses.

Kha. Venice and her deliverance are at hand!
Their fleet stands through the harbor! Hath he slain
The Prefect yet? Is Djabal's change come yet?

Nuncio. [*to Attendants.*] What's this of Venice? Who's
this boy?

[*Attendants whisper.*] One Khalil?
Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,
The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear?
[*To the Druses.*] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears:
Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?
Doth he abet him in his sorceries?
Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid!

[*They spring at KHALIL; as he beats them back.*

Stay! No more bloodshed! Spare deluded youth!
Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach him) — whom, my child?
Thou know'st not what these know, what these declare.
I am an old man as thou seest — have done
With life; and what should move me but the truth?
Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe?
'T is I interpret for thy tribe!

Kha. Oh, this
Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear —
Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake
The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,
The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?
They plant the winged lion in these halls!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] If it be true! Venice? — Oh, never true!
Yet Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,
And fain get footing here, stand close by Rhodes!
Oh, to be duped this way!

Kha. Ere he appear
And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Nor any way to stretch the arch wizard
stark
Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the head,
The trunk were easily stilled. [*To the Druses.*] He? Bring
him forth!

Since so you needs will have it, I assent!
You'd judge him, say you, on the spot? confound
The sorcerer in his very circle? Where's
Our short black-bearded sallow friend who said
He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab?
Bring Djabal forth at once!

Druses.

Ay, bring him forth!

The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk,
And we're the Patriarch's children — true men, we!
Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!

Kha. You dare not so insult him! What, not see . . .

(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstructed,
Untrusted — they know nothing of our Khalif!)
— Not see that if he lets a doubt arise
'Tis but to give yourselves the chance of seeming
To have some influence in your own Return!
That all may say ye would have trusted him
Without the all-convincing glory — ay,
And did! Embrace the occasion, friends! For, think —
What wonder when his change takes place? But now
For your sakes, he should not reveal himself!
No — could I ask and have, I would not ask
The change yet!

Enter DJABAL and LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!

I had said, pardon them for me — for Anael —
For our sakes pardon these besotted men —
Ay, for thine own — they hurt not thee! Yet now
One thought swells in me and keeps down all else.
This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called
Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things
Has said: he is but an old fretful man!
Hakeem — nay, I must call thee Hakeem now —
Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael? — See!

Loys. [to DJA.] Here are thy people! Keep thy word to me!

Dja. Who of my people hath accused me?

Nuncio.

So!

So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?
A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!
May it be augury of thy after-life!
Ever prove truncheon of the Church as now
That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge
Of the Isle here, I claim thee [turning to DJA.] as these bid
me,
Forfeit for murder done thy lawful prince,
Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest!
Why should I hold thee from their hands? (Spells, children?
But hear how I dispose of all his spells!)
Thou art a prophet? — wouldst entice thy tribe
From me? — thou workest miracles? (Attend!
Let him but move me with his spells!) I, Nuncio . . .

Dja. . . . Which how thou camest to be, I say not now,
 Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!
 — Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What need of spells?
 If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop
 To ratify thy compact with her foe,
 The Hospitallers, for this Isle — withdraw
 Her warrant of the deed which reinstates
 My people in their freedom, tricked away
 By him I slew, — refuse to convoy us
 To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave —
 — Then will be time to try what spells can do!
 Dost thou dispute the Republic's power?

Nuncio.

Lo ye!

He tempts me too, the wily exorcist!
 No! The renowned Republic was and is
 The Patriarch's friend: 't is not for courting Venice
 That I — that these implore thy blood of me!
 Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so subtle?
 Ye, Druses, hear him! Will ye be deceived?
 How he evades me! Where's the miracle
 He works? I bid him to the proof — fish up
 Your galley full of bezants that he sank!
 That were a miracle! One miracle!
 Enough of trifling, for it chafes my years.
 I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand forth
 To save you from the good Republic's rage
 When she shall find her fleet was summoned here
 To aid the mummeries of a knave like this!

[*As the Druses hesitate, his Attendants whisper.*

Ah, well suggested! Why, we hold the while
 One who, his close confederate till now,
 Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,
 And every miracle a cheat! Who throws me
 His head? I make three offers, once I offer, —
 And twice . . .

Dja. Let who moves perish at my foot!

Kha. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks! Oh, Anael, Maani,
 Why tarry they?

Druses. [*to each other.*] He can! He can! Live fire —
 [*To the NUNCIO.*] I say he can, old man! Thou know'st him
 not —

Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,
 Plays fawning round him. See! The change begins!
 All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm!
 Look not at me! It was not I!

Dja.

What Druse

Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys, none
Of my own people, as thou said'st, have raised
A voice against me.

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Venice to come! Death!

Dja. [*continuing.*] Confess and go unscathed, however false!
Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would submit
To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!
How said I, Loys?

Nuncio. [*to his Attendants who whisper.*] Ah, ye counsel so?
[*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,
Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee, wizard!
Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you tear him
Joint after joint: well then, one does speak! One,
Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
But who hath voluntarily proposed
To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
Of having trusted him.

[*They bring in a veiled Druse.*]
Loys. Now, Djabal, now!

Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee! Make a ring, sons! —
Speak!

Expose this Djabal — what he was, and how;
The wiles he used, the aims he cherished; all,
Explicitly as late 't was spoken to these
My servants: I absolve and pardon thee.

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?

Dja. Speak,

Recreant!

Druses. Stand back, fool! farther! Suddenly
You shall see some huge serpent glide from under
The empty vest, or down will thunder crash!
Back, Khalil!

Kha. I go back? Thus go I back!

[*To AN.*] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif! Thus!

[*He tears away ANAEL'S veil; DJABAL folds his arms and bows
his head: the Druses fall back: LOYS springs from the side
of DJABAL and the NUNCIO.*]

Loys. Then she was true — she only of them all!
True to her eyes — may keep those glorious eyes,
And now be mine, once again mine! Oh, Anael!
Dared I think thee a partner in his crime —
That blood could soil that hand? nay, 't is mine — Anael,
— Not mine? — Who offer thee before all these
My heart, my sword, my name — so thou wilt say

That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,
Lies — say but that he lies !

Dia. Thou, Anael?

Loys. Nay Djabal, nay, one chance for me — the last!
Thou hast had every other; thou hast spoken
Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee — let me
Speak first now; I will speak now!

Nuncio. Loys, pause !

Thou art the Duke's son, Bretagne's choicest stock,
Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first sword :
Thou wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this trample
To earth ?

Loys. [To AN.] Who had foreseen that one day, Loys
 Would stake these gifts against some other good
 In the whole world? I give them thee! I would
 My strong will might bestow real shape on them,
 That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot
 Tread on their very neck! 'T is not by gifts
 I put aside this Djabal: we will stand —
 We do stand, see, two men! Djabal, stand forth
 Who's worth her, I or thou? I — who for Anael
 Uprightly, purely kept my way, the long
 True way — left thee each by-path, boldly lived
 Without the lies and blood, — or thou, or thou?
 Me! — love me, Anael! Leave the blood and him!
 [To DJA.] Now speak — now, quick on this that I have said, —
 Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man!

Dja. [to AN.] And was it thou betrayedst me? 'T is well !
I have deserved this of thee, and submit.
Nor 't is much evil thou inflictest : life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us :
For there was crime, and must be punishment.
See fate ! By thee I was seduced ! by thee
I perish : yet do I — can I repent ?
I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
By my Frank policy, — and with, in turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart —
While these remained in equipoise, I lived
— Nothing ; had either been predominant,
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
I had been something ; — now, each has destroyed
The other — and behold, from out their crash,
A third and better nature rises up —
My mere man's-nature ! And I yield to it :
I love thee, I who did not love before !

An. Djabal!

Dja. It seemed love, but it was not love —
 How could I love while thou adoredst me?
 Now thou despisest, art above me so
 Immeasurably! Thou, no other, doomest
 My death now; this my steel shall execute
 Thy judgment; I shall feel thy hand in it!
 Oh, luxury to worship, to submit,
 Transcended, doomed to death by thee!

An.

My Djabal!

Dja. Dost hesitate? I force thee then! Approach,
 Druses! for I am out of reach of fate;
 No further evil waits me. Speak the doom!
 Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys!

An. HAKEEM!

[She falls dead.

[The Druses scream, grovelling before him.

Ah Hakeem! — not on me thy wrath!

Biamrallah, pardon! never doubted I!

Ha, dog, how sayest thou?

*[They surround and seize the NUNCIO and his Guards. LOYS
 flings himself upon the body of ANAEL, on which DJABAL
 continues to gaze as stupefied.*

Nuncio.

Caitiffs! Have ye eyes?

Whips, racks should teach you! What, his fools? his dupes?
 Leave me! unhand me!

Kha. [approaching DJABAL timidly.] Save her for my
 sake!

She was already thine; she would have shared

To-day thine exaltation: think, this day

Her hair was plaited thus because of thee!

Yes, feel the soft bright hair — feel!

Nuncio. [struggling with those who have seized him.] What,
 because

His leman dies for him? You think it hard

To die? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice

Of deaths should suit you!

Kha. [bending over ANAEL's body.] Just restore her life!

So little does it! there — the eyelids tremble!

'T was not my breath that made them: and the lips

Move of themselves. I could restore her life!

Hakeem, we have forgotten — have presumed

On our free converse: we are better taught.

See, I kiss — how I kiss thy garment's hem

For her! She kisses it — Oh, take her deed

In mine! Thou dost believe now, Anael? — See,

She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the teeth

Thus, when I spoke first? She believes in thee!

Go not without her to the cedars, lord !
 Or leave us both — I cannot go alone !
 I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak :
 Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew ?
 Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
 Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not ?
 Ere the Venetian trumpet sound — ere thou
 Exalt thyself, O Hakeem ! save thou her !

Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive
 And find me in their toils — dead, very like,
 Under their feet !

What way — not one way yet
 To foil them ? None ? *[Observing DJABAL's face]*

What ails the Khalif ? Ah,
 That ghastly face ! A way to foil them yet !
[To the Druses.] Look to your Khalif, Druses ! Is that face
 God Hakeem's ? Where is triumph, — where is . . . what
 Said he of exaltation — hath he promised
 So much to-day ? Why then, exalt thyself !
 Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul
 In splendor ! Now, bear witness ! here I stand —
 I challenge him exalt himself, and I
 Become, for that, a Druse like all of you !

The Druses. Exalt thyself ! Exalt thyself, O Hakeem !

Dja. *[advances.]* I can confess now all from first to last.
 There is no longer shame for me. I am . . .

[Here the Venetian trumpet sounds — the Druses shout, his eye catches the expression of those about him, and, as the old dream comes back, he is again confident and inspired.]

— Am I not Hakeem ? And ye would have crawled
 But yesterday within these impure courts
 Where now ye stand erect ! — Not grand enough ?
 — What more could be conceded to such beasts
 As all of you, so sunk and base as you,
 Than a mere man ? — A man among such beasts
 Was miracle enough : yet him you doubt,
 Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy —
 With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio
 Thus — (see the baffled hypocrite !) and, best,
 The Prefect there !

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine !

Nuncio. He lies — and twice he lies — and thrice he lies !
 Exalt thyself, Mahound ! Exalt thyself !

Dja. Druses ! we shall henceforth be far away —
 Out of mere mortal ken — above the cedars —
 But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
 Repeopling the old solitudes, — through thee,

My Khalil! Thou art full of me — I fill
 Thee full — my hands thus fill thee! Yestereve,
 — Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant
 Of all to do, requiring word of mine
 To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,
 With truth and purity go other gifts,
 All gifts come clustering to that. Go, lead
 My people home whate'er betide!

[*Turning to the Druses.*] Ye take
 This Khalil for my delegate? To him
 Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon —
 Ye follow?

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!

Dja. [*raises LOYS.*] Then to thee, LOYS! How I wronged
 thee, LOYS!

— Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,
 Fit for thy noble self, revenge — and thus,
 Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the princely soul,
 The first sword of Christ's sepulchre — thou shalt
 Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
 Justice, no less — God's justice and no more,
 For those I leave! — to seeking this, devote
 Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life:
 And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
 My Druses' blessing in thine ears — (they shall
 Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)
 — One cedar-blossom in thy ducal cap,
 One thought of Anael in thy heart, — perchance,
 One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,
 His last word to the living speaks! This done,
 Resume thy course, and, first amid the first
 In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
 Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly —
 What shall withstand thee then?

[*He bends over ANAEL.*] And last to thee!
 Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day,
 Exalted thee? A vain dream — hast thou not
 Won greater exaltation? What remains
 But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?
 Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[*He stabs himself; as he falls, supported by KHALIL and LOYS,*
the VENETIANS enter: the ADMIRAL advances.

Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice! Plant the Lion!

[*At the clash of the planted standard, the Druses shout, and move*
tumultuously forward, LOYS drawing his sword.

Dja. [*leading them a few steps between KHALIL and LOYS.*]
 On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses! [*Dies.*

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS

MILDRED TRESHAM.

AUSTIN TRESHAM.

GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.

THOROLD, Earl Tresham

GERARD, and other Retainers of
Lord Tresham.

TIME 17—

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The interior of a lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1st Ret. Ay, do ! push, friends, and then you'll push down me !

— What for ? Does any hear a runner's foot
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry ?
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant ?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder : here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerald !

Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

2d Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it !
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year ? To-day that young rich bountiful
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham through the country-side,
Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand ?

Ger. What then ?

2d Ret. What then ? Why, you, she speaks to, if she
meets
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart

The boughs to let her through her forest walks,
 You, always favorite for your no-deserts,
 You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues
 To lay his heart and house and broad lands too
 At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze
 Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
 One congee of the least page in his train,
 You sit o' one side — "there 's the Earl," say I —
 "What then," say you!

3d Ret. I'll wager he has let
 Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred, swim
 Over the falls and gain the river!

Ger. Ralph,
 Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
 For you and for your hawks?

4th Ret. Let Gerard be!
 He 's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow stock.
 Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!
 Well done, now — is not this beginning, now,
 To purpose?

1st Ret. Our retainers look as fine —
 That 's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
 With his white staff! Will not a knave behind
 Prick him upright?

4th Ret. He 's only bowing, fool!
 The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

1st Ret. That 's comfort. Here 's a very cavalcade!

3d Ret. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop
 Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
 Their perfumed selves so indispensable
 On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace
 Our family, if I, for instance, stood —
 In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
 A leash of greyhounds in my left? —

Ger. — With Hugh
 The logman for supporter, in his right
 The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!

3d Ret. Out on you, crab! What next, what next? The
 Earl!

1st Ret. Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
 The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six —
 They paw the ground — Ah Walter! and that brute
 Just on his haunches by the wheel!

6th Ret. Ay — Ay!
 You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
 At soups and sauces: what 's a horse to you?

D' ye mark that beast they 've slid into the midst
So cunningly ? — then, Philip, mark this further ;
No leg has he to stand on !

1st Ret. No ? That 's comfort.

2d Ret. Peace, Cook ! The Earl descends. — Well, Gerard,
see

The Earl at least ! Come, there 's a proper man,
I hope ! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
Has got a starrier eye.

3d Ret. His eyes are blue —

But leave my hawks alone !

4th Ret. So young, and yet

So tall and shapely !

5th Ret. Here 's Lord Tresham's self !

There now — there 's what a nobleman should be !

He 's older, graver, loftier, he 's more like

A House's head !

2d Ret. But you 'd not have a boy

— And what 's the Earl beside ? — possess too soon

That stateliness ?

1st Ret. Our master takes his hand —

Richard and his white staff are on the move —

Back fall our people — (tsh ! — there 's Timothy

Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties —

And Peter's cursed rosette 's a-coming off !)

— At last I see our lord's back and his friend's —

And the whole beautiful bright company

Close round them — in they go ! [*Jumping down from the
window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs.*]

Good health, long life,

Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House !

6th Ret. My father drove his father first to court,

After his marriage-day — ay, did he !

2d Ret. God bless

Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl !

Here, Gerard, reach your beaker !

Ger. Drink, my boys !

Don't mind me — all 's not right about me — drink !

2d Ret. [*Aside.*] He 's vexed, now, that he let the show
escape !

[*To GER.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way.

Ger. That way ?

2d Ret. Just so.

Ger. Then my way 's here. [*Goes.*]

2d Ret. Old Gerard

Will die soon — mind, I said it ! He was used

To care about the pitifullest thing
 That touched the House's honor, not an eye
 But his could see wherein : and on a cause
 Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
 Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
 In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
 Such point decorous, and such square by rule —
 He knew such niceties, no herald more :
 And now — you see his humor : die he will !
2d Ret. God help him ! Who's for the great servant's-hall
 To hear what's going on inside ? They'd follow
 Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3d Ret. I ! —

4th Ret. I ! —

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
 Some hint of how the parley goes inside !
 Prosperity to the great House once more !
 Here's the last drop !

1st Ret. Have at you ! Boys, hurrah !

SCENE II. *A saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
 To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
 — Noble among the noblest in itself,
 Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
 New price and lustre, — (as that gem you wear,
 Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
 Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
 Seems to re-kindle at the core) — your name
 Would win you welcome ! —

Mer. Thanks !

Tresh. — But add to that,
 The worthiness and grace and dignity
 Of your proposal for uniting both
 Our Houses even closer than respect
 Unites them now — add these, and you must grant
 One favor more, nor that the least ! — to think
 The welcome I should give ; — 'tis given ! My lord,
 My only brother, Austin — he's the king's.
 Our cousin, Lady Guendolen — betrothed
 To Austin : all are yours.

Mer. I thank you — less
 For the expressed commendings which your seal,
 And only that, authenticates — forbids

My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
 Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
 Than the indulgent insight it implies
 Of what must needs be uppermost with one
 Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
 In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
 A gift, which, if as calmly 't is denied,
 He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
 Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
 Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
 That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
 I love your sister — as you 'd have one love
 That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
 Rank, all the world thinks me, they 're yours, you know,
 To hold or part with, at your choice — but grant
 My true self, me without a rood of land,
 A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
 Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life ?

Guen. [*apart to AUS.*] Why, this is loving, Austin !

Aus. He 's so young !

Guen. Young ? Old enough, I think, to half surmise
 He never had obtained an entrance here,
 Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Aus. Hush !

He reddens.

Guen. Mark him, Austin ; that 's true love !
 Ours must begin again.

Tresh. We 'll sit, my lord.
 Ever with best desert goes diffidence.

I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.

That I am wholly satisfied with you

On this occasion, when a falcon's eye

Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,

Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give

Or to refuse.

Mer. But you, you grant my suit ?
 I have your word if hers ?

Tresh. My best of words
 If hers encourage you. I trust it will.

Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way ?

Mer. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch ;
 I have been used to wander carelessly
 After my stricken game : the heron roused
 Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
 Through thicks and glades a mile in yours, — or else
 Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight

And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And — and then . . . I have seen her.

Guen. [*aside to Aus.*]

Note that mode

Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,
He, having eyes, did see her! You had said —
"On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
Observed a red, where red should not have been,
Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future!

Tresh.

What's to say

May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems —
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are — how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred — thus
We brothers talk!

Mer.

I thank you.

Tresh.

In a word,

Control's not for this lady; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
Can I say more?

Mer.

No more — thanks, thanks — no more!

Tresh. This matter then discussed . . .

Mer.

— We'll waste no breath

On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech
To you would wander — as it must not do,
Since as you favor me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

Tresh. With less regret 't is suffered, that again
We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mer.

We? again? —

Ah yes, forgive me — when shall . . . you will crown
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you — and her.

Tresh.

So soon

As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal — howsoe'er they lean —
A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mer. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

Tresh. So may it prove!

Mer. You, lady, you, sir, take
My humble salutation!

Guen. & Aus. Thanks!

Tresh. Within there!

Servants enter. TRESHAM conducts MERTOUN to the door. Meantime
AUSTIN remarks,

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!
Why, he makes sure of her — "do you say, yes —
She'll not say, no," — what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,
For Heaven's sake urge this on her — put in this —
Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing, —
Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)
"Only let her accept me, and do you
And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

Guen. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame
I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervor's run to waste!
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresh. (returning.) Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady's
first!

How seems he? — seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?
A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,
As you will never! come — the Earl?

Guen. He's young.

Tresh. What's she? an infant save in heart and brain.
Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you . . .
Austin, how old is she?

Guen. There's tact for you!

I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .

Tresh.

Well?

Guen.

— With lacking wit.

Tresh. He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?

Guen. In standing straighter than the steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangue,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear. "Sweet lady,
Your cousin there will do me detriment
He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,
In my old name and fame — be sure he'll leave
My Mildred, when his best account of me
Is ended, in full confidence I wear
My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

Tresh. . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
Of me and my demerits." You are right!
He should have said what now I say for him.
You golden creature, will you help us all?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
— You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,
All three of us: she's in the library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!

Guen. Austin, how we must —!

Tresh. Must what? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!
I challenge you!

Guen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.

Tresh. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him — say, to-morrow —
Next day at furthest.

Guen. Ne'er instruct me!

Tresh. Come!
— He's out of your good graces, since forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections! You're for the composed
Manly assured becoming confidence!
— Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .
I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III. MILDRED'S Chamber. A painted window overlooks the Park. MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

Guen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left
Our talkers in the library, and climbed

The wearisome ascent to this your bower
 In company with you, — I have not dared . . .
 Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you
 Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,
 Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell
 — Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most
 Firm-rooted heresy — your suitor's eyes,
 He would maintain, were gray instead of blue —
 I think I brought him to contrition! — Well,
 I have not done such things, (all to deserve
 A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
 To be dismissed so coolly!

Mil. Guendolen!

What have I done? what could suggest . . .

Guen.

There, there!

Do I not comprehend you 'd be alone
 To throw those testimonies in a heap,
 Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
 With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's
 Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses —
 And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you
 Nearly a whole night's labor. Ask and have!
 Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?
 Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
 The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,
 Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take —
 The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?
 Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!

Mil.

My brother —

Did he . . . you said that he received him well?

Guen. If I said only "well" I said not much —
 Oh, stay — which brother?

Mil.

Thorold! who — who else?

Guen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half, —
 Nay, hear me out — with us he's even gentler
 Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
 The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
 Would die for him, real dying — no mere talk:
 And in the world, the court, if men would cite
 The perfect spirit of honor, Thorold's name
 Rises of its clear nature to their lips.
 But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
 And care no more about what drew it down.
 He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;
 Is he content?

Mil.

You wrong him, Guendolen.

Guen. He's proud, confess ; so proud with brooding o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .

Mil. Dear Guendolen, 't is late !
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 't is midnight.

Guen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .

Mil. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun ?

Guen. Not your brother ; therefore,
Not the whole world.

Mil. I am weary, Guendolen. —
Bear with me !

Guen. I am foolish.

Mil. Oh no, kind —
But I would rest.

Guen. Good night and rest to you !
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair ?

Mil. Brown hair.

Guen. Brown ? why it is brown — how could you know that ?

Mil. How ? did not you — Oh, Austin 't was, declared
His hair was light, not brown — my head ! — and look,
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber ! Sweet,
Good night !

Guen. Forgive me — sleep the soundlier for me !

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*
Mildred !

Perdition ! all's discovered ! Thorold finds
— That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still — to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance ! [Goes.

Mil. Is she — can she be really gone at last ?
My heart ! I shall not reach the window. Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer !

[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's
image in the window, and places it by the purple pane.*

There !

[*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun ! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride !
Too late ! 'T is sweet to think of, sweeter still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
 The curse of the beginning ; but I know
 It comes too late : 't will sweetest be of all
 To dream my soul away and die upon. [A noise without.
 The voice ! Oh why, why glided sin the snake
 Into the paradise Heaven meant us both ?

[The window opens softly. A low voice sings.

There 's a woman like a dew-drop, she 's so purer than the purest ;
 And her noble heart 's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith 's the surest :
 And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre
 Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,
 Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble :
 Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble !

[A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.

And this woman says, " My days were sunless and my nights were moon-
 less,
 Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak tune-
 less,
 If you loved me not ! " And I who — (ah, for words of flame !) adore
 her,

Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her —

[He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her.

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
 And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me !

[The EARL throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.

My very heart sings, so I sing, beloved !

Mil. Sit, Henry — do not take my hand !

Mer.

'T is mine.

The meeting that appalled us both so much
 Is ended.

Mil. What begins now ?

Mer. Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

Mil. That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
 The whole world's best of blisses : we — do we
 Deserve that ? Utter to your soul, what mine
 Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,
 Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,
 And so familiar now ; this will not be !

Mer. Oh Mildred, have I met your brother's face,
 Compelled myself — if not to speak untruth,
 Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
 The truth, as — what had e'er prevailed on me
 Save you, to venture ? Have I gained at last
 Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
 And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too ?
 Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break

On the strange unrest of our night, confused
 With rain and stormy flaw — and will you see
 No dripping blossom, no fire-tinted drops
 On each live spray, no vapor steaming up,
 And no expressless glory in the East?

When I am by you, to be ever by you,
 When I have won you and may worship you.
 Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be?"

Mil. Sin has surprised us; so will punishment.

Mer. No — me alone, who sinned alone!

Mil.

The night

You likened our past life to — was it storm
 Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mer.

Of your life

I spoke — what am I, what my life, to waste
 A thought about when you are by me? — you
 It was, I said my folly called the storm
 And pulled the night upon. 'T was day with me —
 Perpetual dawn with me.

Mil.

Come what, come will,

You have been happy: take my hand!

Mer. [*after a pause.*]

How good

Your brother is! I figured him a cold —
 Shall I say, haughty man?

Mil.

They told me all.

I know all.

Mer.

It will soon be over.

Mil.

Over?

Oh, what is over? what must I live through
 And say, "'t is over?" Is our meeting over?
 Have I received in presence of them all
 The partner of my guilty love, — with brow
 Trying to seem a maiden's brow — with lips
 Which make believe that when they strive to form
 Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
 It is the nearest ever they approached
 A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip —
 With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
 Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop
 This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
 In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
 Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
 Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
 But, frenzied, pour forth all our woful story.
 The love, the shame, and the despair — with them
 Round me aghast as men round some cursed fount

That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not . . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace That's gone from me — gone once, and gone forever!

Mer. Mildred, my honor is your own. I'll share Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.

Mil. I'll meet their faces, Henry!

Mer.

When? to-morrow!

Get done with it!

Mil.

Oh Henry, not to-morrow!

Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner. — How you must
Despise me!

Mer.

Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted — still
Uplifts, through this protracted agony,
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me, — first pace
The chamber with me — once again — now, say
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
— Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me! — but no — no, you'll not
Repeat that? — will you, Mildred, repeat that?

Mil. Dear Henry!

Mer.

I was scarce a boy — e'en now
What am I more? And you were infantine
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
— You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of — I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew? I spoke. Oh Mildred, feel you not
That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,
Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
— That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt — your own
Or other's guilt — the girlish undisguised

Delight at a strange novel prize — (I talk
 A silly language, but interpret, you!)
 If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
 Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
 If you had pity on my passion, pity
 On my protested sickness of the soul
 To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
 Your eyelids and the eyes beneath — if you
 Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts —
 If I grew mad at last with enterprise
 And must behold my beauty in her bower
 Or perish — (I was ignorant of even
 My own desires — what then were you?) if sorrow —
 Sin — if the end came — must I now renounce
 My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
 Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
 Contempt were all of this!

Mil. Do you believe . . .

Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you — you believe
 That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
 The past! We'll love on; you will love me still!

Mer. Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,
 Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast —
 Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
 Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
 Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!
 Mildred, I love you and you love me!

Mil. Go!

Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

Mer. This is not our last meeting?

Mil. One night more.

Mer. And then — think, then!

Mil. Then, no sweet courtship-days,

No dawning consciousness of love for us,
 No strange and palpitating births of sense
 From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
 Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

Mer. How else should love's perfected noontide follow?
 All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mil. So may it be! but —

You are cautious, Love?

Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

Mer. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed?
 To-morrow night?

Mil. Farewell! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore?
 His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf

Receives him : now the moonlight as he runs
 Embraces him — but he must go — is gone.
 Ah, once again he turns — thanks, thanks, my love !
 He's gone. Oh I'll believe him every word !
 I was so young, I loved him so, I had
 No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
 There may be pardon yet : all's doubt beyond.
 Surely the bitterness of death is past !

ACT II.

SCENE. *The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.

This way ! In, Gerard, quick !

[*As GERARD enters, TRESHAM secures the door.*

Now speak ! or, wait —

I'll bid you speak directly.

[*Sits himself.*

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale
 You just now told me ; it eludes me ; either
 I did not listen, or the half is gone
 Away from me. How long have you lived here ?
 Here in my house, your father kept our woods
 Before you ?

Ger. — As his father did, my lord.

I have been eating, sixty years almost,
 Your bread.

Tresh. Yes, yes. You ever were of all
 The servants in my father's house, I know,
 The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

Ger.

I'll speak

God's truth. Night after night . . .

Tresh.

Since when ?

Ger.

At least

A month — each midnight has some man access
 To Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh.

Tush, "access" —

No wide words like "access" to me !

Ger.

He runs

Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
 Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

Tresh. The last great yew-tree ?

Ger.

You might stand upon

The main boughs like a platform. Then he . . .

Tresh.

Quick!

Ger. Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,
— I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think — for this I do not vouch — a line
That reaches to the lady's casement —

Tresh. — Which

He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached, — to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not enter?
Gerard?

Ger. There is a lamp that's full i' the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

Tresh. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?

Ger. — Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane — a small dark-blue pane; he waits
For that among the boughs: at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresh. — And stay?

Ger. An hour, two hours.

Tresh. And this you saw
Once? — twice? — quick!

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Ger. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresh. Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?

Ger. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [after a pause.] You have no cause
— Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?

Ger. Oh my lord, only once — let me this once
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that — fire, if I turned
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,

If down I flung myself and strove to die.
 The lady could not have been seven years old
 When I was trusted to conduct her safe
 Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
 I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
 Within a month. She ever had a smile
 To greet me with — she . . . if it could undo
 What's done, to lop each limb from off this trunk . . .
 All that is foolish talk, not fit for you —
 I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
 For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed
 To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
 Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,
 Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts
 What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed
 Either I must confess to you, or die :
 Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
 That crawls, to have betrayed my lady !

Tresh.

No —

No, Gerard !

Ger.

Let me go !

Tresh.

A man, you say :

What man ? Young ? Not a vulgar hind ? What dress ?

Ger. A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak

Wraps his whole form ; even his face is hid ;

But I should judge him young : no hind, be sure !

Tresh. Why ?

Ger.

He is ever armed : his sword projects

Beneath the cloak.

Tresh.

Gerard, — I will not say

No word, no breath of this !

Ger.

Thanks, thanks, my lord ! [*Goes.*

TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,

Oh, thought's absurd ! — as with some monstrous fact

Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give

Merciful God that made the sun and stars,

The waters and the green delights of earth,

The lie ! I apprehend the monstrous fact —

Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,

And yield my reason up, inadequate

To reconcile what yet I do behold —

Blasting my sense ! There's cheerful day outside :

This is my library, and this the chair

My father used to sit in carelessly

After his soldier-fashion, while I stood

Between his knees to question him : and here

Gerard our gray retainer, — as he says,
 Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age, —
 Has told a story — I am to believe!
 That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,
 Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
 Would she, or could she, err — much less, confound
 All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven
 Keep me within its hand! — I will sit here
 Until thought settle and I see my course.
 Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!

[*As he sinks his head between his arms on the table, GUENDOLEN's voice is heard at the door.*]

Lord Tresham! [*She knocks.*] Is Lord Tresham there?

[*TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the first book above him and opens it.*]

Tresh. Come in! [*She enters.*]

Ha, Guendolen — good morning.

Guen. Nothing more?

Tresh. What should I say more?

Guen. Pleasant question! more?

This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
 Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"
 "The Earl" — whose worth did I asseverate
 Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
 What is all this? You are not well!

Tresh. Who, I?

You laugh at me.

Guen. Has what I'm fain to hope,
 Arrived then? Does that huge tome show some blot
 In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
 Than Arthur's time?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's chamber?

Guen. Oh late enough, I told you! The main thing
 To ask is, how I left her chamber, — sure,
 Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
 Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresh. Send her here!

Guen. Thorold?

Tresh. I mean — acquaint her, Guendolen,
 — But mildly!

Guen. Mildly?

Tresh. Ah, you guessed aright!
 I am not well: there is no hiding it.
 But tell her I would see her at her leisure —
 That is, at once! here in the library!
 The passage in that old Italian book

We hunted for so long is found, say, found —
 And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
 That she must come — and instantly!

Guen.

I'll die

Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
 Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

Tresh.

Go! or, Guendolen,

Be you at call, — with Austin, if you choose, —

In the adjoining gallery! There go!

[GUENDOLEN goes.]

Another lesson to me! You might bid

A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct

Some sly investigation point by point

With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch

The inquisitorial cleverness some praise!

If you had told me yesterday, "There's one

You needs must circumvent and practise with,

Entrap by policies, if you would worm

The truth out: and that one is — Mildred!" There,

There — reasoning is thrown away on it!

Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove

That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!

Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to say,

Or do, or think! Force on me but the first

Abomination, — then outpour all plagues,

And I shall ne'er make count of them!

Enter MILDRED.

Mil.

What book

Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen

Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That book?

That's Latin surely.

Tresh.

Mildred, here's a line,

(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)

"Love conquers all things." What love conquers them?

What love should you esteem — best love?

Mil.

True love.

Tresh. I mean, and should have said, whose love is best

Of all that love or that profess to love?

Mil. The list's so long: there's father's, mother's, husband's . . .

Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love

For a sole sister must exceed them all.

For see now, only see! there's no alloy

Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold

Of other loves — no gratitude to claim;

You never gave her life, not even aught

That keeps life — never tended her, instructed,

Enriched her — so your love can claim no right
 O'er her save pure love's claim : that 's what I call
 Freedom from earthliness. You 'll never hope
 To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
 As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
 Or played together in the meadow hay.
 Oh yes — with age, respect comes, and your worth
 Is felt, there 's growing sympathy of tastes,
 There 's ripened friendship, there 's confirmed esteem :
 — Much head these make against the new comer !
 The startling apparition, the strange youth —
 Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
 Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
 This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
 . . . Her soul, that is, — the sister's soul ! With her
 'T was winter yesterday ; now, all is warmth,
 The green leaf 's springing and the turtle's voice,
 " Arise and come away ! " Come whither ? — far
 Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
 The brother's somewhat insignificant
 Array of rights ! All which he knows before,
 Has calculated on so long ago !
 I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
 Contented with its little term of life,
 Intending to retire betimes, aware
 How soon the background must be place for it,
 — I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
 All the world's love in its unworldliness.

Mil. What is this for ?

Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for !

Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon !
 That 's one of many points my haste left out —
 Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
 Between the being tied to you by birth,
 And you, until those slender threads compose
 A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
 And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours :
 So close you live and yet so far apart !
 And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
 The sweet and palpitating mystery
 That makes her sacred ? You — for you I mean,
 Shall I speak, shall I not speak ?

Mil.

Speak !

Tresh.

I will.

Is there a story men could — any man
 Could tell of you, you would conceal from me ?

I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip.
 Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
 And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve
 The world — the world of better men than I,
 And women such as I suppose you. Speak!
 [*After a pause.*] Not speak? Explain then! Clear it up then!
 Move

Some of the miserable weight away
 That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
 Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
 Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
 Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?
 [*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has night by night
 Admittance to your chamber?

[*After a pause.*] Then, his name!
 Till now, I only had a thought for you:
 But now, — his name!

Mil. Thorold, do you devise
 Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
 There be! 'Tis nought to say that I'll endure
 And bless you, — that my spirit yearns to purge
 Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:
 But do not plunge me into other guilt!
 Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

Tresh. Then judge yourself! How should I act? Pro-
 nounce!

Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!
 To die here in this chamber by that sword
 Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,
 Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!
 'T were easily arranged for me: but you —
 What would become of you?

Tresh. And what will now
 Become of me? I'll hide your shame and mine
 From every eye: the dead must heave their hearts
 Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
 They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed
 Your paramour above our mother's tomb;
 Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
 We too will somehow wear this one day out:
 But with to-morrow hastens here — the Earl!
 The youth without suspicion that faces come
 From heaven, and hearts from . . . whence proceed such hearts?
 I have dispatched last night at your command
 A missive bidding him present himself
 To-morrow — here — thus much is said: the rest

Is understood as if 't were written down —
 "His suit finds favor in your eyes:" — now dictate
 This morning's letter that shall countermand
 Last night's — do dictate that!

Mil. But Thorold — if

I will receive him as I said?

Tresh. The Earl?

Mil. I will receive him.

Tresh. [*Starting up.*] Ho there! Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!
 The woman there!

Aus. & Guen. How? Mildred?

Tresh. Mildred once!

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
 Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
 — I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
 Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which holds
 You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
 A thousand Treshams — never one like her!
 No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
 Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
 To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
 O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
 The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!
 Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
 Into — what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
 Know her!

Guen. Oh Mildred, look to me, at least!

Thorold — she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands
 Rigid as stone and whiter!

Tresh. You have heard . . .

Guen. Too much! You must proceed no further.

Mil.

Yes —

Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!

Tresh. All is truth,

She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,
 All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
 Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
 Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
 I'd bind myself before them to exact
 The prescribed vengeance — and one word of hers,
 The sight of her, the bare least memory
 Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
 Above all prides, my all in all so long,
 Would scatter every trace of my resolve.

What were it silently to waste away
 And see her waste away from this day forth,
 Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
 And grow acquainted with the grave, and die
 Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
 It were not so impossible to bear.
 But this — that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
 Of love with the successful gallant there,
 She calmly bids me help her to entice,
 Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
 Who thinks her all that's chaste and good and pure,
 — Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit
 As honor's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
 — That she'll receive Lord Mertoun — (her own phrase) —
 This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,
 Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,
 "Talk not to me of torture — I'll betray
 No comrade I've pledged faith to!" — you have heard
 Of wretched women — all but Mildreds — tied
 By wild illicit ties to losels vile
 You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply
 "Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
 In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
 Repute or friends?" — and you have felt your heart
 Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
 As to so many friends; bad as you please,
 You've felt they were God's men and women still,
 So, not to be disowned by you. But she
 That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
 As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
 Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,
 I curse her to her face before you all.
 Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right
 To both! It hears me now — shall judge her then!

[As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM rushes out.]

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you!

Guen.

We?

What, and leave Mildred? We? Why, where's my place
 But by her side, and where yours but by mine?
 Mildred — one word! Only look at me, then!

Aus. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.
 She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guen.

Us two?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I
 Approved your speech — if you (to put the thing
 At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make

The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw
 Regard to others of its right or wrong,
 — If with a death-white woman you can help,
 Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
 You left her — or if I, her cousin, friend
 This morning, playfellow but yesterday.
 Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,
 "I'd serve you if I could," should now face round
 And say, "Ah that's to only signify
 I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself —
 So long as fifty eyes await the turn
 Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,
 I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need —
 When every tongue is praising you, I'll join
 The praisers' chorus — when you're hemmed about
 With lives between you and detraction — lives
 To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
 Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
 Their worship throws about you, — then indeed,
 Who'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so
 We said, and so we did, — not Mildred there
 Would be unworthy to behold us both,
 But we should be unworthy, both of us,
 To be beheld by — by — your meanest dog,
 Which, if that sword were broken in your face
 Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
 And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
 — Would push his way through all the hooters, gain
 Your side, go off with you and all your shame
 To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,
 Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred, — here's
 Your brother says he does not believe half —
 No, nor half that — of all he heard! He says,
 Look up and take his hand!

Aus. Look up and take
 My hand, dear Mildred!

Mil. I — I was so young!
 Beside, I loved him, Thorold — and I had
 No mother; God forgot me: so I fell.

Guen. Mildred!

Mil. Require no further! Did I dream
 That I could palliate what is done? All's true.
 Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?
 Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.
 I thought that Thorold told you.

Guen. What is this?
 Where start you to?

Mil. Oh Austin, loosen me !
 You heard the whole of it — your eyes were worse
 In their surprise, than Thorold's ! Oh, unless
 You stay to execute his sentence, loose
 My hand ! Has Thorold gone, and are you here ?

Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait
 Your bidding ; be you silent, sleep or muse !
 Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
 How can we do it if we are not by ?
 Here's Austin waiting patiently your will !
 One spirit to command, and one to love
 And to believe in it and do its best,
 Poor as that is, to help it — why, the world
 Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
 By just such a beginning !

Mil. I believe
 If once I threw my arms about your neck
 And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
 Should weep again.

Guen. Let go her hand now, Austin !
 Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think
 On the world's seemings and realities,
 Until I call you. [AUSTIN goes.

Mil. No — I cannot weep.
 No more tears from this brain — no sleep — no tears !
 O Guendolen, I love you !

Guen. Yes : and "love"
 Is a short word that says so very much !
 It says that you confide in me.

Mil. Confide !
Guen. Your lover's name, then ! I've so much to learn,
 Ere I can work in your behalf !

Mil. My friend,
 You know I cannot tell his name.

Guen. At least
 He is your lover ? and you love him too ?

Mil. Ah, do you ask me that ? — but I am fallen
 So low !

Guen. You love him still, then ?

Mil. My sole prop
 Against the guilt that crushes me ! I say.
 Each night ere I lie down, "I was so young —
 I had no mother, and I loved him so !"
 And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
 Trust him my soul in sleep.

Guen. How could you let us
 E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then ?

Mil. There is a cloud around me.

Guen. But you said

You would receive his suit in spite of this?

Mil. I say there is a cloud . . .

Guen. No cloud to me!

Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

Mil. What maddest fancy . . .

Guen. [*calling aloud.*] Austin! (spare your pains —
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep) —

Mil. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!
Have I confided in you . . .

Guen. Just for this!

Austin! — Oh, not to guess it at the first!

But I did guess it — that is, I divined,

Felt by an instinct how it was: why else

Should I pronounce you free from all that heap

Of sins which had been irredeemable?

I felt they were not yours — what other way

Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine!

Mil. If you would see me die before his face . . .

Guen. I'd hold my peace! And if the Earl returns
To-night?

Mil. Ah Heaven, he's lost!

Guen. I thought so. Austin!

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?

Aus. Thorold's gone,

I know not how, across the meadow-land.

I watched him till I lost him in the skirts

O' the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone? All thwarts us.

Mil. Thorold too?

Guen. I have thought. First lead this Mildred to her room.

Go on the other side; and then we'll seek

Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the way,

The greatest comfort in the world. You said

There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet,

He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come!

ACT III.

SCENE I. *The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED'S window.
A light seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

Again here ! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath — the orchard — I have traversed glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend
Hither or soon or late ; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step ; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
Their will no longer : do your will with me !
Oh, bitter ! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing : all men hope, and see their hopes
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
On many a beauty's wimple — would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here ? What must I do ? [*a bell strikes.*] A bell ?
Midnight ! and 't is at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
— Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you ! Hist ! This tree will serve.

[He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enters MERTON cloaked as before.]

Mer. Not time ! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart ! I thought the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star ! Oh, no matter for the past !
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive : to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path

My rash love lured her to ! Each day must see
 Some fear of hours effaced, some hope renewed :
 Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
 Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.

[The light is placed above in the purple pane.]

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star !
 I never saw it lovelier than now
 It rises for the last time. If it sets,
 'T is that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

[As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue, TRESHAM arrests his arm.]

Unhand me — peasant, by your grasp ! Here 's gold.
 'T was a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck
 A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
 The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.

Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me !
 — Out of the shadow !

Mer. I am armed, fool !

Tresh. Yes,

Or no ? You'll come into the light, or no ?

My hand is on your throat — refuse ! —

Mer. That voice !

Where have I heard . . . no — that was mild and slow.

I'll come with you. *[They advance.]*

Tresh. You're armed : that's well. Declare
 Your name — who are you ?

Mer. (Tresham ! — she is lost !)

Tresh. Oh, silent ? Do you know, you bear yourself
 Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
 How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
 When they're detected, still your kind has looked !
 The bravo holds an assured countenance,
 The thief is voluble and plausible,
 But silently the slave of lust has crouched
 When I have fancied it before a man.
 Your name ?

Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham — ay,
 Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail —

That he for his own sake forbear to ask

My name ! As heaven's above, his future weal

Or woe depends upon my silence ! Vain !

I read your white inexorable face.

Know me, Lord Tresham ! *[He throws off his disguises.]*

Tresh. Mertoun !

[After a pause.]

Draw now !

Mer.

Hear me

But speak first !

Tresh. Not one least word on your life !
 Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
 The least word that informs me how you live
 And yet seem what you seem ! No doubt 't was you
 Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.
 We should join hands in frantic sympathy
 If you once taught me the unteachable,
 Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
 With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
 The old belief — a life like yours is still
 Impossible. Now draw !

Mer. Not for my sake,
 Do I entreat a hearing — for your sake,
 And most, for her sake !

Tresh. Ha ha, what should I
 Know of your ways ? A miscreant like yourself,
 How must one rouse his ire ? A blow ? — that's pride,
 No doubt, to him ! One spurns him, does one not ?
 Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
 Into his face ! Come ! Which, or all of these ?

Mer. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be judge !
 Can I avoid this ? Have your will, my lord !

[He draws and, after a few passes, falls.]

Tresh. You are not hurt ?

Mer. You 'll hear me now !

Tresh. But rise !

Mer. Ah Tresham, say I not "you 'll hear me now !"
 And what procures a man the right to speak
 In his defence before his fellow-man,
 But — I suppose — the thought that presently
 He may have leave to speak before his God
 His whole defence ?

Tresh. Not hurt ? It cannot be !
 You made no effort to resist me. Where
 Did my sword reach you ? Why not have returned
 My thrusts ? Hurt where ?

Mer. My lord —

Tresh. How young he is !

Mer. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
 I have entangled other lives with mine.
 Do let me speak, and do believe my speech !
 That when I die before you presently, —

Tresh. Can you stay here till I return with help ?

Mer. Oh, stay by me ! When I was less than boy
 I did you grievous wrong and knew it not —
 Upon my honor, knew it not ! Once known,

I could not find what seemed a better way
 To right you than I took: my life — you feel
 How less than nothing were the giving you
 The life you 've taken! But I thought my way
 The better — only for your sake and hers:
 And as you have decided otherwise,
 Would I had an infinity of lives
 To offer you! Now say — instruct me — think
 Can you from the brief minutes I have left
 Eke out my reparation? Oh think — think!
 For I must wring a partial — dare I say,
 Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

Tresh. I do

Forgive you.

Mer. Wait and ponder that great word!
 Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
 To speak to you of — Mildred!

Tresh. Mertoun, haste

And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you
 Should tell me for a novelty you're young,
 Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.
 Be but your pardon ample as my own!

Mer. Ah Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop
 Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
 Why, 'twas my very fear of you, my love
 Of you — (what passion like a boy's for one
 Like you?) — that ruined me! I dreamed of you —
 You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
 The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
 To knit myself to you: but I was young,
 And your surpassing reputation kept me
 So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
 With less of love, my glorious yesterday
 Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
 Had taken place perchance six months ago.
 Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
 I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
 Let me look up into your face; I feel
 'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
 Where? where?

[As he endeavors to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?

Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
 That's bleeding fast away! I'll live — must live,
 There, if you'll only turn me I shall live
 And save her! Tresham — oh, had you but heard!

Had you but heard! What right was yours to set
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
All had gone otherwise"? We've sinned and die:
Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you'll die,
And God will judge you.

Tresh. Yes, be satisfied!

That process is begun.

Mer. And she sits there
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her —
You, not another — say, I saw him die
As he breathed this, "I love her" — you don't know
What those three small words mean! Say, loving her
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
Dear Mildred! 'tis so easy, and you'll 'scape
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you? — heartless men shall have my heart,
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
Aware, perhaps, of every blow — oh God! —
Upon those lips — yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave
Their honorable world to them! For God
We're good enough, though the world casts us out.

[A whistle is heard.]

Tresh. Ho, Gerard!

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN and GUENDOLEN, with lights.

No one speak! You see what's done.

I cannot bear another voice.

Mer. There's light —
Light all about me, and I move to it.
Tresham, did I not tell you — did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?

Tresh. I will bear those words to her.

Mer. Now?

Tresh. Now. Lift you the body, and leave me
The head.

[As they have half raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.]

Mer. I knew they turned me: turn me not from her!
There! stay you! there! [Dies.]

Guen. [after a pause.] Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:

Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.

Tresh. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,
And only I, see Mildred.

Guen. She will die.

Tresh. Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?
Why, Austin's with you!

Aus. Had we but arrived

Before you fought!

Tresh. There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him — the boy! I'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard — thus!
Now bear him on before me.

Aus. Whither bear him?

Tresh. Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there next,
We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*
Will she die, Guendolen?

Guen. Where are you taking me?

Tresh. He fell just here.

Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
— You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste —
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
You turn your head: and I then? —

Guen. What is done

Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
Bear up against this burden: more remains
To set the neck to!

Tresh. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone

With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell — farewell!

SCENE II. MILDRED'S Chamber. MILDRED alone.

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity, — you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
Oh, 't is not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not? — fails
Just this first night out of so many nights?
Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,
As so few hours since, on that seat, we 'd love
No more — contrive no thousand happy ways
To hide love from the loveless, any more.
I think I might have urged some little point
In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless
For the least hint of a defence: but no,
The first shame over, all that would might fall.
No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover — oh I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'T is she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
Forsakes me: only Henry's left me — left?
When I have lost him, for he does not come,
And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break up
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!

Tresh. [*without.*] Mildred!

Mil. Come in! Heaven hears me!
[*Enter TRESHAM.*] You? alone?

Oh, no more cursing!

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.

There — you sit!

Mil. Say it, Thorold — do not look
The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheek so pale!

Tresh. My thought?

Mil. All of it!

Tresh. How we waded — years ago —
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came —
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!
Mildred, —

Mil. You call me kindlier by my name
Than even yesterday: what is in that?

Tresh. It weighs so much upon my mind that I
This morning took an office not my own!
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,
Content or not, at every little thing
That touches you. I may with a wrung heart
Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
Will you forgive me?

Mil. Thorold? do you mock?
Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred! — are you silent, Sweet?

Mil. [*starting up.*] Why does not Henry Mertoun come to-night?

Are you, too, silent?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you!
You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
What is it I must pardon? This and all?
Well, I do pardon you — I think I do.
Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresh. He bade me tell you . . .

Mil. What I do forbid
Your utterance of! So much that you may tell
And will not — how you murdered him . . . but, no!
You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there: must I say
"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:
Of this last deed Another's judge: whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.

Mil. Oh, true! There's nought for me to pardon! True!
You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
Death makes me sure of him forever! You
Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,

And take my answer — not in words, but reading
Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .

Tresh. Death? You are dying too? Well said
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you 'd die:
But she was sure of it.

Mil. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

Tresh. Him you loved:
And me?

Mil. Ah Thorold! Was 't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me — whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
— Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me! — you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair —
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honor bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes — you struck him down!

Tresh. No! no!
Had I but heard him — had I let him speak
Half the truth — less — had I looked long on him
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it: I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable.
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;
I would not glance: my punishment 's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you — say on —
You curse me?

Mil. As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven, — I — forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!

[Falls on his neck.

There! Do not think too much upon the past!
The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud

While it stood up between my friend and you ;
 You hurt him 'neath its shadow : but is that
 So past retrieve ? I have his heart, you know ;
 I may dispose of it : I give it you !

It loves you as mine loves ! Confirm me, Henry !

[Dies.

Tresh. I wish thee joy, Beloved ! I am glad
 In thy full gladness !

Guen. [without.] Mildred ! Tresham !

[Entering with AUSTIN.] Thorold,

I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons !

That's well.

Tresh. Oh, better far than that !

Guen. She's dead !

Let me unlock her arms !

Tresh. She threw them thus

About my neck, and blessed me, and then died :

You'll let them stay now, Guendolen !

Aus. Leave her

And look to him ! What ails you, Thorold ?

Guen. White

As she, and whiter ! Austin ! quick — this side !

Aus. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth ;
 Both lips, where they're not bitten through, are black :
 Speak, dearest Thorold !

Tresh. Something does weigh down

My neck beside her weight : thanks : I should fall

But for you, Austin, I believe ! — there, there,

'T will pass away soon ! — ah, — I had forgotten :

I am dying.

Guen. Thorold — Thorold — why was this ?

Tresh. I said, just as I drank the poison off,

The earth would be no longer earth to me,

The life out of all life was gone from me.

There are blind ways provided, the foredone

Heart-weary player in this pageant-world

Drops out by, letting the main masque defile

By the conspicuous portal : I am through —

Just through !

Guen. Don't leave him, Austin ! Death is close.

Tresh. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.

I see you, Austin — feel you : here's my hand,

Put yours in it — you, Guendolen, yours too !

You're lord and lady now — you're Treshams ; name

And fame are yours : you hold our 'scutcheon up.

Austin, no blot on it ! You see how blood

Must wash one blot away : the first blot came

And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All's gules again : no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn !

Aus. No blot shall come !

Tresh. I said that : yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me ! [*Dies.*

Guen. [*letting fall the pulseless arm.*] Ah Thorold, we can
but — remember you !

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

A PLAY

"Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather,
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?"

HANMER.

NO ONE LOVES AND HONORS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN DOES
ROBERT BROWNING;

WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY TO GIVE
HIM IN PROOF OF IT, MUST SAY SO.

LONDON, 1844.

PERSONS.

COLOMBE OF RAYESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.

SABYNE, ADOLF, her Attendants.

GUIBERT, GAUCELME, MAUFROY, CLUGNET, Courtiers.

VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves.

PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy.

MELCHIOR, his Confidant.

PLACE, *The Palace at Juliers.*

TIME, 16—.

ACT I.

Morning. SCENE. A corridor leading to the Audience-chamber.

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY and other Courtiers, round GUIBERT
who is silently reading a paper: as he drops it at the end —

Gui. That this should be her birthday; and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege;
And that this also must become the day . . .
Oh, miserable lady!

1st Court. Ay, indeed?

2d Court. Well, Guibert?

3d Court. But your news, my friend, your news!
The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's pleasure,
The better for us all: how writes the Prince?
Give me! I'll read it for the common good.

Gui. In time, sir, — but till time comes, pardon me!

Our old Duke just disclosed his child's retreat,
 Declared her true succession to his rule,
 And died : this birthday was the day, last year,
 We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein —
 That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
 On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived queen
 Over the water-buds. — to Juliers' court
 With joy and bustle. Here again we stand ;
 Sir Gaucelme's buckle's constant to his cap :
 To-day's much such another sunny day !

Gau. Come, Guibert, this outgrows a jest, I think !
 You're hardly such a novice as to need
 The lesson, you pretend.

Gui. What lesson, sir ?
 That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,
 Should, first and last of all, look to himself ?
 Why, no : and therefore with your good example,
 (— Ho, Master Adolf !) — to myself I'll look.

Enter ADOLF.

Gui. The Prince's letter ; why, of all men else
 Comes it to me ?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
 Sir Guibert ! 'Twas the Prince's express charge,
 His envoy told us, that the missive there
 Should only reach our lady by the hand
 Of whosoever held your place.

Gui. Enough ! [ADOLF retires.]
 Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain poor
 Indifferently honorable place.

My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their teeth
 At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
 To find me never in the mood to quit ?

— Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and —
 This to present our lady. Who'll accept ?

You. — you — you ? There it lies, and may, for me !

Mau. [*a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud.*] " Prince
 Berthold, proved by titles following

Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day
 To claim his own, with license from the Pope,
 The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France " . . .

Gau. Sufficient " titles following," I judge !
 Don't read another ! Well, — " to claim his own ? "

Mau. " — And take possession of the Duchy held
 Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,
 By " . . . Colombe, Juliers' mistress, so she thinks,
 And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find !

Who wants the place and paper? Guibert's right.
 I hope to climb a little in the world, —
 I'd push my fortunes. — but, no more than he,
 Could tell her on this happy day of days,
 That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,
 There's nothing left to call her own. Sir Clugnet,
 You famish for promotion; what say you?

Clug. [*an old man.*] To give this letter were a sort, I take it,
 Of service: services ask recompense:

What kind of corner may be Ravestein?

Gui. The castle? — Oh, you'd share her fortunes? Good!
 Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
 With no such bad remainder of a roof.

Clug. Oh, — but the town?

Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts;
 A church whereto was once a spire, 't is judged;
 And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.

Clug. Still, there's some revenue?

Gui. Else Heaven forfend!
 You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase;
 So, when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer
 Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,
 Their grateful raftsmen fling a guilder in;
 — That's if he mean to pass your way next time.

Clug. If not?

Gui. Hang guilders, then — he blesses you!

Clug. What man do you suppose me? Keep your paper!
 And, let me say, it shows no handsome spirit
 To dally with misfortune: keep your place!

Gau. Some one must tell her.

Gui. Some one may: you may!

Gau. Sir Guibert, 't is no trifle turns me sick
 Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
 But this goes near it. Where's there news at all?
 Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
 He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,
 That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;
 That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
 And, she away, indisputable heir,
 Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
 Claimed Juliers? — nor, as he preferred his claim,
 That first this, then another potentate,
 Inclined to its allowance? — I or you,
 Or any one except the lady's self?
 Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
 To break the business to her! Things might change:

At all events, we'd see next masque at end,
 Next mummerly over first: and so the edge
 Was taken off sharp tidings as they came.
 Till here's the Prince upon us, and there's she
 — Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
 With just the faintest notion possible
 That some such claimant earns a livelihood
 About the world, by feigning grievances —
 Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
 And fewer listen to, a second time.

Your method proves a failure; now try mine!
 And, since this must be carried . . .

Gui. [*snatching the paper from him.*] By your leave!
 Your zeal transports you! 'T will not serve the Prince
 So much as you expect, this course you'd take.
 If she leaves quietly her palace, — well;
 But if she died upon its threshold, — no:
 He'd have the trouble of removing her.
 Come, gentles, we're all — what the devil knows!
 You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside —
 You broke your father's heart superiorly
 To gather his succession — never blush!
 You're from my province, and, be comforted,
 They tell of it with wonder to this day.
 You can afford to let your talent sleep.
 We'll take the very worst supposed, as true:
 There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child
 Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
 With whom the right lay! Call the Prince our Duke!
 There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything
 More than a young maid with the bluest eyes:
 And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's heart
 Coolly as Gaucelme could and would! No haste!
 His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud:
 We'll not advance to his perfection yet —
 Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I've ruined Maufroy
 Forever as a courtier!

Gau. Here's a coil!
 And, count us, will you? Count its residue,
 This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!
 A birthday, too, a gratulation-day!
 I'm dumb: bid that keep silence!

Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Guibert?
 He's right: that does say something: that's bare truth.
 Ten — twelve, I make: a perilous dropping off!

Gui. Pooh — is it audience hour? The vestibule

Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
That want our privilege of entry here.

Gau. Adolf! [*Re-enter ADOLF.*] Who's outside?

Gui. Oh, your looks suffice!

Nobody waiting?

Mau. [*looking through the door-folds.*] Scarce our number!

Gui. 'Sdeath!

Nothing to beg for, to complain about?

It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast

As thus to frighten all the world!

Gau. The world

Lives out of doors, sir — not with you and me

By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,

Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside's free

To every wind from every compass-point

And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.

The Prince comes and the lady's People go;

The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee —

Why should they wait for winter-time? 'T is instinct:

Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

Gui. That's their craft?

And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth

That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,

Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal songs!

Well 't is my comfort, you could never call me

The People's Friend! The People keep their word —

I keep my place: don't doubt I'll entertain

The People when the Prince comes, and the People

Are talked of! Then, their speeches — no one tongue

Found respite, not a pen had holiday

— For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves!

Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,

They wince and fret enough, but pay they must

— We manage that, — so, pay with a good grace

They might as well, it costs so little more.

But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next

Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,

In public — there they have us if they will,

We're at their mercy after that, you see!

For one tax not ten devils could extort —

Over and above necessity, a grace;

This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit —

Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute-penny,

And crowning attestation, all works well.

Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!

These cappings quick, these crook-and-cringings low,

Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
 With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth —
 So tender they their love ; and, tender made,
 Go home to curse us, the first doit we ask.
 As if their souls were any longer theirs !
 As if they had not given ample warrant
 To who should clap a collar on their neck,
 Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
 And take them for the brute they boast themselves !
 Stay — there 's a bustle at the outer door —
 And somebody entreating . . . that 's my name !
 Adolf, — I heard my name !

Adolf. 'T was probably

The suitor.

Gui. Oh, there is one ?

Adolf. With a suit

He 'd fain enforce in person.

Gui. The good heart

— And the great fool ! Just ope the mid-door's fold !

Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see ?

Adolf. If it bear plenteous sign of travel . . . ay,
 The very cloak my comrades tore !

Gui. Why tore ?

Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim :
 Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts
 Lest he should miss the moment.

Gui. Where 's he now ?

Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more :
 They have ado enough to thrust him back.

Gui. Ay — but my name, I caught ?

Adolf. Oh, sir — he said

— What was it ? — You had known him formerly,

And, he believed, would help him did you guess

He waited now ; you promised him as much :

The old plea ! 'Faith, he 's back, — renews the charge !

[*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the man parleys, peace out-
 side —

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there !

Gau. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path,
 A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.

Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon
 He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow
 At each repulse —

Gau. I noticed he 'd a brow.

Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile
 Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,

And presently turns round, quiet again,
 With some new pretext for admittance. — Back!
 [To GUIBERT.] — Sir, he has seen you! Now cross halberts!
 Ha —

Pascal is prostrate — there lies Fabian too!
 No passage! Whither would the madman press?
 Close the doors quick on me!

Gui. Too late! He's here.

Enter, hastily and with discomposed dress, VALENCE.

Val. Sir Guibert, will you help me? — Me, that come
 Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,
 To represent their heights and depths of woe
 Before our Daches and obtain relief!
 Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:
 But not a common hindrance drives me back
 On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit
 With hope for the first time, which sent me forth.
 Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women, speak!
 Who followed me — your strongest — many a mile
 That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
 — Who sit — your weakest — by the city gates,
 To take me fuller of what news I bring
 As I return — for I must needs return!
 — Can I? 'T were hard, no listener for their wrongs,
 To turn them back upon the old despair —
 Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus —
 So, I do — any way you please — implore!
 If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?
 Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!
 — Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
 Your words and deeds caught up at second hand, —
 Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,
 O' the very levity and recklessness
 Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.
 Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,
 Is Cleves forgotten? — Then, remember me!
 You promised me that you would help me once
 For other purpose: will you keep your word?

Gui. And who may you be, friend?

Val. Valence of Cleves.

Gui. Valence of . . . not the advocate of Cleves,
 I owed my whole estate to, three years back?
 Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,
 You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,
 I was so nearly ousted of my land
 By some knaves'-pretext, — (eh? when you refused me

Your ugly daughter, Clugnet!) — and you've heard
 How I recovered it by miracle
 — (When I refused her!) Here 's the very friend,
 — Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!
 Nay, Valence, this procedure 's vile in you!
 I 'm no more grateful than a courtier should,
 But politic am I — I bear a brain,
 Can cast about a little, might require
 Your services a second time. I tried
 To tempt you with advancement here to court
 — “No!” — well, for curiosity at least
 To view our life here — “No!” — our Duchess, then, —
 A pretty woman 's worth some pains to see,
 Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown
 Complete the forehead pale and tresses pure . . .

Val. Our city trusted me its miseries,
 And I am come.

Gui. So much for taste! But “come,”
 So may you be, for anything I know,
 To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,
 And with an equal chance you get all three!
 If it was ever worth your while to come,
 Was not the proper way worth finding too?

Val. Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came —

Gui. — And said? —

Val. — That I had brought the miseries
 Of a whole city to relieve.

Gui. — Which saying
 Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,
 And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,
 My intervention, I shall not dispute,
 Procures you audience; which, if I procure, —
 That paper 's closely written — by Saint Paul,
 Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,
 Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and C!
 Perhaps you 'd enter, make a reverence,
 And launch these “miseries” from first to last?

Val. How should they let me pause or turn aside?

Gau. [*to VALENCE.*] My worthy sir, one question! You've
 come straight

From Cleves, you tell us: heard you any talk
 At Cleves about our lady?

Val. Much.

Gau. And what?

Val. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.

Gau. That, you believed?

Val. You see me, sir !

Gau. — Nor stopped

Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,
For any — rumors you might find afloat ?

Val. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.

Gau. This is the lady's birthday, do you know ?
— Her day of pleasure ?

Val. — That the great, I know,
For pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude pleasure when a duty offers :
Even as, for duty born, the lowly too
May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach :
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir !

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert, here's your man !
No scruples now —

You'll never find his like ! Time presses hard.
I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,
But you can't keep the hour of audience back
Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.
[*Pointing to VALENCE.*] Entrust him with it — fool no chance
away !

Gui. — Him ?

Gau. — With the missive ! What's the man to
her ?

Gui. No bad thought ! — Yet, 't is yours, who ever played
The tempting serpent : else 't were no bad thought !
I should — and do — mistrust it for your sake,
Or else . . .

Enter an Official who communicates with ADOLF.

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the court !

Gui. Give us a moment, Adolf ! Valence, friend,
I'll help you ! We of the service, you're to mark,
Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folks
Outside, get access through our help alone ;
— Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose
So ever will be : your natural lot is, therefore,
To wait your turn and opportunity,
And probably miss both. Now, I engage
To set you, here and in a minute's space,
Before the lady, with full leave to plead
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,
To heart's content.

Val. I grieve that I must ask, —
This being, yourself admit, the custom here, —
To what the price of such a favor mounts ?

Gui. Just so ! You're not without a courtier's tact.

Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompense.

Val. Yours is? —

Gui. A trifle: here's a document

"Tis some one's duty to present her Grace —

I say, not mine — these say, not theirs — such points
Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it? Just say, "I am bidden lay
This paper at the Duchess' feet!"

Val. No more?

I thank you, sir!

Adolf. Her Grace receives the court!

Gui. [*Aside.*] Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the mass-priest!

Do —

Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings back;
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
Completely! Let me live quite his, or yours!

[*The Courtiers begin to range themselves, and move toward the door.*]

After me, Valence! So, our famous Cleves
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace?
And dear enough — it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly.
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross;
Yon gray urn's veritable marcasite,
The Pope's gift: and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your foot
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence!

Val. I shall speak.

Gui. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Guibert — it were no such un-
graceful thing

If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck
With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do!
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry
"Yield strangers our allegiance? First I'll perish
Beside your Grace!" — and so give me the cue
To . . .

Gui. — Clap your hand to note-book and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I conceive.

[*To VALENCE.*] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half suspect
You're plotting to supplant us, me the first,
I' the lady's favor! Is't the grand harangue
You mean to make, that thus engrosses you?
— Which of her virtues you'll apostrophize?
Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,

Of that close-curved, not unbecoming hair?
Or what else ponder you?

Val. My townsmen's wrongs.

ACT II.

Noon. SCENE. *The Presence-chamber.*

The DUCHESS and SABYNE.

The D. Announce that I am ready for the court!

Sab. 'T is scarcely audience-hour, I think; your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd: but few can have arrived.

The D. Let those not yet arrived, then, keep away!
'T was me, this day last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate?

Sab. Forgive me!

The D. Stay, Sabyne; let me hasten to make sure
Of one true thanker: here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its privilege!
It is my birth's event they celebrate:
You need not wish me more such happy days,
But — ask some favor! Have you none to ask?
Has Adolf none, then? this was far from least
Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself! It seemed so natural
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
Should be the power and leave of doing good
To you, and greater pleasure to myself.
You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf?
The rest is my concern.

Sab. Your Grace is ever
Our lady of dear Ravestein, — but, for Adolf . .

The D. "But"? You have not, sure, changed in your
regard
And purpose towards him?

Sab. We change?

The D. Well then? Well?

Sab. How could we two be happy, and, most like,
Leave Juliers, when — when . . . but 'tis audience-time!

The D. "When, if you left me, I were left indeed!"
Would you subjoin that? — Bid the court approach!
— Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne?
Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,

If friends detain me, and get blame for it,
There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng
Scarce one half comes now.

Sub. [Aside.] One half? No, alas!

The D. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud
Over my fortunes, strike each loyal heart.
They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,
Some foolish arrogant pretence he makes,
May grow more foolish and more arrogant,
They please to apprehend! I thank their love.
Admit them!

Sub. [Aside.] How much has she really learned?

The D. Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan waits?
— Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised
From nothing — come, he's faithful to me, come!
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder — yes,
The fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier — what said he to that?
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!

[SABYNE goes out.]

The D. Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer too.
Next year 't is the old place again, perhaps —
The water-breeze again, the birds again.
— It cannot be! It is too late to be!
What part had I, or choice in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to think
Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task was just — to live, — to live,
And, answering ends there was no need explain,
To render Juliers happy — so they said.
All could not have been falsehood: some was love,
And wonder and obedience. I did all
They looked for: why then cease to do it now?
Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And — ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,
Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
It cannot nor it shall not be! His right?
Well then, he has the right, and I have not,
— But who bade all of you surround my life
And close its growth up with your ducal crown
Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?
I could have been like one of you, — loved, hoped,
Feared, lived and died like one of you — but you
Would take that life away and give me this,
And I will keep this! I will face you! Come!

Enter the Courtiers and VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your Grace!

The D. [*Aside, as they pay their devoir.*] The same words,
the same faces, — the same love!

I have been overfearful. These are few;

But these, at least, stand firmly: these are mine.

As many come as may; and if no more,

'T is that these few suffice — they do suffice!

What succor may not next year bring me? Plainly,

I feared too soon. [*To the Court.*] I thank you, sirs: all
thanks!

Val. [*Aside, as the DUCHESS passes from one group to another, conversing.*] 'T is she — the vision this day last
year brought,

When, for a golden moment at our Cleves,

She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves

Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke

— Not that she could have noted the recluse

— Ungainly, old before his time — who gazed.

Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that gaze

Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own!

She was above it — but so would not sink

My gaze to earth! The People caught it, hers —

Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,

Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul

Ere she retired and left me — them? She turns —

There's all her wondrous face at once! The ground

Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his paper.*]

These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!

The D. [*to the Court.*] Nay, compliment enough! and kind-
ness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.

'T was fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,

I tasted life's pure pleasure — one such, pure,

Is worth a thousand, mixed — and youth's for pleasure:

Mine is received; let my age pay for it.

Gau. So pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your Grace,
Should never go together?

Gui.

How, Sir Gaucelme?

Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly

At the snatched breathing-intervals of work?

As good you saved it till the dull day's-end

When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone.

Eat first, then work upon the strength of food!

The D. True: you enable me to risk my future,
By giving me a past beyond recall.

I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year :
 Let me endeavor to be the Duchess now !
 And so, — wh it news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of ?

[*As they advance a little, and GUIBERT speaks —*

— That gentleman ?

Val. [*Aside.*] I feel her eyes on me.

Gui. [*to VALENCE.*] The Duchess, sir, inclines to hear your suit.

Advance ! He is from Cleves.

Val. [*coming forward.*] [*Aside.*] Their wrongs — their wrongs !

The D. And you, sir, are from Cleves ? How fresh in mind,
 The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves !
 She entertained me bravely, but the best
 Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by
 With insuppressive joy on every face !
 What says my ancient famous happy Cleves ?

Val. Take the truth, lady — you are made for truth !

So think my friends : nor do they less deserve
 The having you to take it, you shall think,
 When you know all — nay, when you only know
 How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,
 When the poor acquiescing multitude
 Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart
 Into unnoticed corners, that the few,
 Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,
 Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight
 With joyous faces fit to bear away
 And boast of as a sample of all Cleves
 — How, when to daylight these crept out once more,
 Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags
 Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread,
 That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,
 And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them
 To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path
 — How, when the golden flood of music and bliss
 Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again
 Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare
 — Then I, their friend had only to suggest
 “ Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp ! ”
 And as one man they cried “ He speaks the truth :
 Show her the horror ! Take from our own mouths
 Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too ! ”
 This they cried, lady ! I have brought the wrongs.

The D. Wrongs ? Cleves has wrongs — apparent now and thus ?

I thank you ! In that paper ? Give it me !

Val. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise, Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced
Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon! I forget
I buy the privilege of this approach,
And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet.

[*Presenting GUIBERT's paper.*]

Gui. Stay! for the present . . .

The D. Stay, sir? I take aught

That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!

[*The DUCHESS reads hastily; then, turning to the Courtiers—*

What have I done to you? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the words
In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.

For such a flower, you plucked me; well, you erred —
Well, 't was a weed; remove the eye-sore quick!

But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?
— That if 't be faded 't is with prayer's sole breath —
That the one day it boasted was God's day?

Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:
So, fling me forth, and — all is best for all!

[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke, it
seems —

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's —
Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me

Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
— But take them, from a heart that yearns to give!

Find out their love, — I could not; find their fear, —
I would not; find their like, — I never shall,

Among the flowers! [*Taking off her coronet.*]

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!

Val. [*advancing to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert, knight, they call
you — this of mine

Is the first step I ever set at court.

You dared make me your instrument, I find;

For that, so sure as you and I are men,

We reckon to the utmost presently :
 But as you are a courtier and I none,
 Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,
 Have too far outraged, by my ignorance
 Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed
 A second step and risk addressing her :
 — I am degraded — you, let me address !
 Out of her presence, all is plain enough
 What I shall do — but in her presence, too,
 Surely there 's something proper to be done.
 [*To the others.*] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright —
 May I not strike this man to earth ?

The Courtiers. [*as GUIBERT springs forward, withholding him.*] Let go !

— The clothiers' spokesman, Guibert ? Grace a churl ?

The D. [*to VALENCE.*] Oh, be acquainted with your party, sir !

He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts ;
 A lion crests him for a cognizance
 "Scorning to waver" — that 's his 'scutcheon's word ;
 His office with the new Duke — probably
 The same in honor as with me ; or more,
 By so much as this gallant turn deserves.
 He's now, I dare say, of a thousand times
 The rank and influence that remain with her
 Whose part you take ! So, lest for taking it
 You suffer . . .

Val. I may strike him then to earth ?

Gui. [*falling on his knee.*] Great and dear lady, pardon me ! Hear once !

Believe me and be merciful — be just !
 I could not bring myself to give that paper
 Without a keener pang than I dared meet
 — And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here
 — No one dared meet it. Protestation 's cheap, —
 But, if to die for you did any good,
 [*To GAUCELME.*] Would not I die, sir ? Say your worst of me !
 But it does no good, that's the mournful truth.
 And since the hint of a resistance, even,
 Would just precipitate, on you the first,
 A speedier ruin — I shall not deny,
 Saving myself indubitable pain,
 I thought to give you pleasure (who might say ?)
 By showing that your only subject found
 To carry the sad notice, was the man
 Precisely ignorant of its contents ;

A nameless, mere provincial advocate ;
One whom 't was like you never saw before,
Never would see again. All has gone wrong ;
But I meant right. God knows, and you, I trust !

The D. A nameless advocate, this gentleman ? —
— (I pardon you, Sir Guibert !)

Gui. [*rising, to VALENCE.*] — Sir, and you ? —

Val. — Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.
Now, you have only me to reckon with.

The D. One I have never seen, much less obliged ? —

Val. Dare I speak, lady ?

The D. Dare you ! Heard you not
I rule no longer ?

Val. Lady, if your rule
Were based alone on such a ground as these

[*Pointing to the Courtiers.*
Could furnish you, — abjure it ! They have hidden
A source of true dominion from your sight.

The D. You hear them — no such source is left . . .

Val. Hear Cleves !

Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,
Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,
Sure of a like to-morrow — but as sure
Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.
What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour ?
What makes — instead of rising, all as one,
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,
— What makes that there 's an easier help, they think,
For you, whose name so few of them can spell,
Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw, —
You simply have to understand their wrongs,
And wrongs will vanish — so, still trades are plied,
And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here ?
There is a vision in the heart of each
Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure :
And these embodied in a woman's form
That best transmits them, pure as first received,
From God above her, to mankind below.
Will you derive your rule from such a ground,
Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,
Of this man — this — and this ?

The D. [*after a pause.*] You come from Cleves.
How many are at Cleves of such a mind ?

Val. [*from his paper.*] "We, all the manufacturers of Cleves —"

The D. Or stay, sir — lest I seem too covetous —
Are you my subject? such as you describe,
Am I to you, though to no other man?

Val. [*from his paper.*] — "Valence ordained your Advocate at Cleves" —

The D. [*replacing the coronet.*] Then I remain Cleves' Duchess! Take you note,
While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
I stand her lady till she waves me off!
For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;
Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,
Return his missive with its due contempt! [*Casting it away.*]

Gui. [*picking it up.*] — Which to the Prince I will deliver, lady,

(Note it down, Gaucelme) — with your message too!

The D. I think the office is a subject's, sir!
— Either . . . how style you him? — my special guarder
The Marshal's — for who knows but violence
May follow the delivery? — Or, perhaps,
My Chancellor's — for law may be to urge
On its receipt! — Or, even my Chamberlain's —
For I may violate established form!

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir, — for the half-hour till this service ends,
Will you become all these to me?

Val. [*falling on his knee.*] My liege!

The D. Give me! [*The Courtiers present their badges of office.*]
[*Putting them by.*] — Whatever was their virtue once,
They need new consecration. [*Raising VALENCE.*] Are you mine?

— I will be Duchess yet! [*She retires.*]

The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet!
A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!
I'll stand by her, — and I, whate'er betide!

Gui. [*to VALENCE.*] Well done, well done, sir! I care not who knows,

You have done nobly and I envy you —
Though I am but unfairly used, I think:
For when one gets a place like this I hold,
One gets too the remark that its mere wages,
The pay and the preferment, make our prize.
Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,
We're laughed at — much would zeal and faith subsist
Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,
Our wages discontinue, — then, indeed,

Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,)
 Are not released — having been pledged away
 I wonder, for what zeal and faith in turn?
 Hard money purchased me my place! No, no —
 I'm right, sir — but your wrong is better still,
 If I had time and skill to argue it.
 Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please —
 If you like, — fight you, as you seem to wish —
 (The kinder of me that, in sober truth,
 I never dreamed I did you any harm) .

Gau. — Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt,
 His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,
 And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor
 And Chamberlain and Heaven knows what beside!

Clug. [*to VALENCE.*] You stare, young sir, and threaten! Let
 me say,
 That at your age, when first I came to court,
 I was not much above a gentleman;
 While now . . .

Val. — You are Head-Lackey? With your office
 I have not yet been graced, sir!

Other Courtiers to Clug. Let him talk!
 Fidelity, disinterestedness,
 Excuse so much! Men claim my worship ever
 Who staunchly and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives.

Courtiers. Ha? How?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
 At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

1st Court. The Prince! This foolish business puts all out.

2d Court. Let Gaucelme speak first!

3d Court. Better I began
 About the state of Juliers: should one say
 All's prosperous and inviting him?

4th Court. — Or rather,

All's prostrate and imploring him?

5th Court. That's best.

Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

4th Court. [*to VALENCE.*] Sir — sir —
 If you'll but lend that paper — trust it me,
 I'll warrant . . .

5th Court. Softly, sir — the Marshal's duty!

Clug. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first
 By virtue of his patent?

Gau. Patents? — Duties?

All that, my masters, must begin again!
 One word composes the whole controversy:
 We're simply now — the Prince's!

The Others.

Ay — the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE.

Sab. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!
 Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?
 She needs him. Who is here the Duchess's?

Val. [*starting from his reverie.*] Most gratefully I follow to
 her feet.

ACT III.

Afternoon. SCENE. The Vestibule.

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.

Berth. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.
 [*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne:
 Better try Aix, though! —

Mel. Please 't your Highness speak?

Berth. [*as before*] Aix, Cologne, Frankfort, — Milan; —
 Rome! —

Mel. — The Grave.

— More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
 Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watched
 Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.
 I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
 Had met some shade of opposition here
 — Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,
 Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.
 You must not look for next achievement's palm
 So easily: this will hurt your conquering.

Berth. My next? Ay — as you say, my next and next!
 Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,
 This quiet entrance-morning: listen why!
 Our little burgh, now, Juliers — 't is indeed
 One link, however insignificant,
 Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,
 — A link I must secure; but otherwise,
 You'd wonder I esteem it worth my grasp.
 Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns!
 It happens now — this very nock — to be
 A place that once . . . not a long while since, neither
 When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
 Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,

Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
 A poor priest merely, — then, I say, this place
 Shone my ambition's object : to be Duke —
 Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems now.
 My rights were far from being judged as plain
 In those days as of late, I promise you :
 And 't was my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
 Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
 Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace
 (I was a boy ¹) — bestow her hand at length,
 And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.
 Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now.
 Hearken : if ever I be Emperor,
 Remind me what I felt and said to-day !

Mel. All this consoles a bookish man like me.
 — And so will weariness cling to you. Wrong,
 Wrong ! Had you sought the lady's court yourself, —
 Faced the redoubtables composing it,
 Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed the other, —
 Pleading by writ and word and deed, your cause, —
 Conquered a footing inch by painful inch, —
 And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
 On her for prize, — the right life had been lived,
 And justice done to divers faculties
 Shut in that brow. Yourself were visible
 As you stood victor, then ; whom now — (your pardon !)
 I am forced narrowly to search and see —
 So are you hid by helps — this Pope, your uncle —
 Your cousin, the other King ! You are a mind, —
 They, body : too much of mere legs-and-arms
 Obstructs the mind so ! Match these with their like :
 Match mind with mind !

Berth. And where's your mind to match ?
 They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal !
 I'd subjugate this city — where's its mind ?

[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*]

Mel. Got out of sight when you came troops and all !
 And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood —
 A smug economy of both, this first !

[*As CLUGNET bows obsequiously.*]

Well done, gout, all considered ! — I may go ?

Berth. Help me receive them !

Mel.

Oh, they just will say

What yesterday at Aix their fellows said, —
 At Treves, the day before ! — Sir Prince, my friend,
 Why do you let your life slip thus ? — Meantime,

I have my little Juliers to achieve —
 The understanding this tough Platonist,
 Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius —
 Lend me a company of horse and foot,
 To help me through his tractate — gain my Duchy!

Berth. And Empire, after that is gained, will be — ?

Mel. To help me through your uncle's comment, Prince!

[*Goes*]

Berth. Ah? Well: he o'er-refines — the scholar's fault!
 How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,
 I lead now, differs from the common life
 Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
 Of joys and griefs, — still there is such degree —
 Mere largeness in a life is something, sure, —
 Enough to care about and struggle for,
 In this world: for this world, the size of things;
 The sort of things, for that to come, no doubt.
 A great is better than a little aim:
 And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth
 And failed so, under that gray convent-wall,
 Was I more happy than I should be now

[*By this time, the Courtiers are ranged before him.*]

If failing of my Empire? Not a whit.

— Here comes the mind, it once had tasked me sore

To baffle, but for my advantages!

All's best as 't is: these scholars talk and talk.

[*Seats himself.*]

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers! — to his heritage!

Our dutifullest service proffer we!

Clug. I, please your Highness, having exercised
 The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,
 With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

Berth. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!
 The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded
 On strictest justice; if you concede it, therefore,
 I do not wonder: and the kings my friends
 Protesting they will see such claim enforced,
 You easily may offer to assist us.

But there's a slight discretionary power
 To serve me in the matter, you've had long,
 Though late you use it. This is well to say —
 But could you not have said it months ago?
 I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true —
 'Tis flung me — I stoop down, and from the ground
 Pick it, with all you placid standers-by —

And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say !

Gui. (By Paul, the advocate our doughty friend
Cuts the best figure !)

Gau. If our ignorance
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

Berth. Loyalty ? Yours ? — Oh — of yourselves you speak !
— I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope !

And since I have been forced repeat my claims
As if they never had been made before,
As I began, so must I end, it seems.

The formal answer to the grave demand !
What says the lady ?

Courtiers. [one to another.] 1st Court. Marshal ! 2d Court.
Orator !

Gui. A variation of our mistress' way !
Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet ! — that, he waits !

1st Court. Your place !

2d Court. Just now it was your own !

Gui. The devil's !

Berth. [to GUIBERT.] Come forward, friend — you with the
paper, there !

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained ?

By this time, I may boast proficiency

In each decorum of the circumstance.

Give it me as she gave it — the petition !

Demand, you style it — What's required, in brief ?

What title's reservation, appanage's

Allowance ? — I heard all at Treves, last week.

Gau. [to GUIBERT.] " Give it him as she gave it ! "

Gui. And why not ?

[To BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your summons thus to-
gether,

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn

So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

Courtiers.

Stop —

Idiot !

Gui. — Inform you she denied your claim,
Defied yourself ! (I tread upon his heel,
The blustering advocate !)

Berth. By heaven and earth !

Dare you jest, sir ?

Gui. Did they at Treves, last week ?

Berth. [starting up.] Why then, I look much bolder than I
knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought —

Since, as I live, I took you as you entered
 For just so many dearest friends of mine,
 Fled from the sinking to the rising power
 — The sneaking 'st crew, in short, I e'er despised !
 Whereas, I am alone here for the moment,
 With every soldier left behind at Aix !
 Silence ? That means the worst ? I thought as much !
 What follows next then ?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince — he raves !

Gui. He asked the truth and why not get the truth ?

Berth. Am I a prisoner ? Speak, will somebody ?

— But why stand paltering with imbeciles ?

Let me see her, or . . .

Gui. Her, without her leave,
 Shall no one see : she's Duchess yet !

Courtiers. [*Footsteps without, as they are disputing.*] Good chance !

She's here — the Lady Colombe's self !

Berth. 'Tis well !

[*Aside.*] Array a handful thus against my world ?

Not ill done truly ! Were not this a mind

To match one's mind with ? Colombe ! — Let us wait !

I failed so, under that gray convent wall !

She comes.

Gui. The Duchess ! Strangers, range yourselves !

[*As the DUCHESS enters in conversation with VALENCE, BERTHOLD and the Courtiers fall back a little.*]

The D. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,
 My heart : the right is Berthold's and not mine.

Val. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust

Your power to acquiesce so patiently

As you believe, in such a dream-like change

Of fortune — change abrupt, profound, complete ?

The D. Ah, the first bitterness is over now !

Bitter I may have felt it to confront

The truth, and ascertain those natures' value

I had so counted on ; that was a pang :

But I did bear it, and the worst is over.

Let the Prince take them !

Val. — And take Juliers too ?

— Your people without crosses, wands and chains —
 Only with hearts ?

The D. There I feel guilty, sir !

I cannot give up what I never had :

For I ruled these, not them — these stood between.

Shall I confess, sir ? I have heard by stealth

Of Berthold from the first : more news and more :

Closer and closer swam the thunder cloud,

But I was safely housed with these, I knew.

At times when to the casement I would turn,

At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,

I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge —

Yet I was sure some one of all these friends

Would interpose : I followed the bird's flight

Or plucked the flower — some one would interpose !

Val. Not one thought on the People — and Cleves there !

The D. Now, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,
Its shadow goes without so much regret :

Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,

Answer Prince Berthold !

Val. Then you acquiesce ?

The D. Remember over whom it was I ruled !

Gui. [*stepping forward.*] Prince Berthold, yonder, craves an audience, lady !

The D. [*to VALENCE.*] I only have to turn, and I shall face

Prince Berthold ! Oh, my very heart is sick !

It is the daughter of a line of Dukes

This scornful insolent adventurer

Will bid depart from my dead father's halls !

I shall not answer him — dispute with him —

But, as he bids, depart ! Prevent it, sir !

Sir — but a mere day's respite ! Urge for me

— What I shall call to mind I should have urged
When time's gone by — 't will all be mine, you urge !

A day — an hour — that I myself may lay

My rule down ! 'T is too sudden — must not be !

The world's to hear of it ! Once done — forever !

How will it read, sir ? How be sung about ?

Prevent it !

Berth. [*approaching.*] Your frank indignation, lady,
Cannot escape me. Overbold I seem ;

But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise

At this reception, — this defiance, rather.

And if, for their and your sake, I rejoice

Your virtues could inspire a trusty few

To make such gallant stand in your behalf,

I cannot but be sorry, for my own,

Your friends should force me to retrace my steps :

Since I no longer am permitted speak

After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed

No less by courtesy than relationship —

Which I remember, if you once forgot.
 But never must attack pass unrepelled.
 Suffer, that through you, I demand of these,
 Who controverts my claim to Juliers ?

The D.

— Me

You say, you do not speak to —

Berth.

Of your subjects

I ask, then : whom do you accredit ? Where

Stand those should answer ?

Val. [advancing.]

The lady is alone !

Berth. Alone, and thus ? So weak and yet so bold ?

Val. I said she was alone —

Berth.

— And weak, I said.

Val. When is man strong until he feels alone ?

It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,
 Created organs, such as those you seek,
 By which to give its varied purpose shape —
 And, naming the selected ministrants,
 Took sword, and shield, and sceptre, — each, a man !
 That strength performed its work and passed its way :
 You see our lady : there, the old shapes stand !
 — A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor —
 “ Be helped their way, into their death put life
 And find advantage ! ” — so you counsel us.
 But let strength feel alone, seek help itself, —
 And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts
 The sea's breast out, — as, littered 'mid the waves
 The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,
 So turns our lady to her true resource,
 Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,
 — And I am first her instinct fastens on.
 And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,
 The People will not have you ; nor shall have !
 It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
 And fight you to the last, — though that does much,
 And men and children, — ay, and women too,
 Fighting for home, are rather to be feared
 Than mercenaries fighting for their pay —
 But, say you beat us, since such things have been,
 And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot
 Upon a steaming bloody plash — what then ?
 Stand you the more our lord that there you stand ?
 Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,
 A pillared flame whereto all ardors tend —
 Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,
 A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood —

But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
 Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,
 For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,
 We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil !
 — Our conqueror? Yes ! — Our despot? Yes ! — Our Duke?
 Know yourself, know us !

Berth. [*who has been in thought.*] Know your lady, a' so !
 [*Very deferentially.*] — To whom I needs must exculpate myself

For having made a rash demand, at least.
 Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be
 Her chief adviser, I submit my claims, [Giving papers.
 But, this step taken, take no further step,
 Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.
 Here be our meeting-place ; at night, its time :
 Till when I humbly take the lady's leave !

[*He withdraws. As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE, the Courtiers interchange glances and come forward a little.*

1st Court. So, this was their device !

2d Court. No bad device !

3d Court. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend
 From Cleves, and she, the Duchess !

4th Court. — And moreover,
 That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help
 Their loves !

5th Court. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do ?

Gui. [*advancing.*] I laid my office at the Duchess' foot —

Others. And I — and I — and I !

The D. I took them, sirs.

Gui. [*Apart to VALENCE.*] And now, sir, I am simple knight
 again —

Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet
 That never bore affront ; whate'er your birth, —
 As things stand now, I recognize yourself
 (If you'll accept experience of some date)
 As like to be the leading man o' the time,
 Therefore as much above me now, as I
 Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered
 To fight you : will you be as generous
 And now fight me ?

Val. Ask when my life is mine !

Gui. ('T is hers now !)

Clug. [*Apart to VALENCE, as GUIBERT turns from him.*]

You, sir, have insulted me
 Grossly, — will grant me, too, the selfsame favor
 You've granted him, just now, I make no question ?

Val. I promise you, as him, sir.

Clug. Do you so?

Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir.

You'll get me reinstated in my office

As you will Guibert!

The D. I would be alone!

[*They begin to retire slowly; as VALENCE is about to follow—*

Alone, sir — only with my heart: you stay!

Gau. You hear that? Ah, light breaks upon me! Cleves —

It was at Cleves some man harangued us all —

With great effect. — so those who listened said,

My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was this he?

Guibert, — your strange, disinterested man!

You uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!

The modest worth you mean to patronize!

He cares about no Duchesses, not he —

His sole concern is with the wrongs of Cleves!

What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you at last?

Gui. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof! — I'd back
And in her very face . . .

Gau. Apply the match

That fired the train, — and where would you be, pray?

Gui. With him!

Gau. Stand, rather, safe outside with me!

The mine's charged — shall I furnish you the match

And place you properly? — To the antechamber!

Gui. Can you?

Gau. Try me! — Your friend's in fortune.

Gui. Quick —

To the antechamber! — He is pale with bliss!

Gau. No wonder! Mark her eyes!

Gui. To the antechamber!

[*The Courtiers retire.*

The D. Sir, could you know all you have done for me

You were content! You spoke, and I am saved!

Val. Be not too sanguine, lady! Ere you dream,

That transient flush of generosity

Fades off, perchance! The man, beside, is gone, —

Him we might bend; but see, the papers here —

Inalterably his requirement stays,

And cold hard words have we to deal with now.

In that large eye there seemed a latent pride,

To self-denial not incompetent,

But very like to hold itself dispensed

From such a grace: however, let us hope!

He is a noble spirit in noble form.

I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
 As with the fancy how he could subject
 Himself upon occasion to — himself!
 From rudeness, violence, you rest secure;
 But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!

The D. You, — who have opened a new world to me,
 Will never take the faded language up
 Of that I leave? My Duchy — keeping it,
 Or losing it — is that my sole world now?

Val. Ill have I spoken if you thence despise
 Juliers; although the lowest, on true grounds,
 Be worth more than the highest rule, on false:
 Aspire to rule, on the true grounds!

The D. Nay, hear —
 False, I will never — rash, I would not be!
 This is indeed my birthday — soul and body,
 Its hours have done on me the work of years.
 You hold the requisition: ponder it!
 If I have right, my duty's plain: if he —
 Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice!
 At night you meet the Prince; meet me at eve!
 Till when, farewell! This discomposes you?
 Believe in your own nature, and its force
 Of renovating mine! I take my stand
 Only as under me the earth is firm:
 So, prove the first step stable, all will prove.
 That first, I choose — [*laying her hand on his,*] — the next to
 take, choose you! [*She withdraws.*]

Val. [*after a pause.*] What drew down this on me? — on
 me, dead once,
 She thus bids live, — since all I hitherto
 Thought dead in me, youth's ardors and emprise,
 Burst into life before her, as she bids
 Who needs them. Whither will this reach, where end?
 Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she's above —
 So very far above me! All's too plain:
 I served her when the others sank away,
 And she rewards me as such souls reward —
 The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,
 The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,
 — Reward, that's little, in her generous thought,
 Though all to me . . .

I cannot so disclaim
 Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is!
 She loves me!
 [*Looking at the Prince's papers.*] — Which love, these, per-
 chance, forbid.

Can I decide against myself — pronounce
 She is the Duchess and no mate for me?
 — Cleves, help me! Teach me, — every haggard face, —
 To sorrow and endure! I will do right
 Whatever be the issue. Help me, Cleves!

ACT IV.

Evening. SCENE. An Antechamber.

Enter the Courtiers.

Mau. Now, then, that we may speak — how spring this mine?

Gau. Is Guibert ready for its match? He cools!
 Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there!
 "Stay, Valence! Are not you my better self?"
 And her cheek mantled —

Gui. Well, she loves him, sir
 And more, — since you will have it I grow cool, —
 She's right: he's worth it.

Gau. For his deeds to-day?
 Say so!

Gui. What should I say beside?

Gau. Not this —
 For friendship's sake leave this for me to say —
 That we're the dupes of an egregious cheat!
 This plain unpractised suitor, who found way
 To the Duchess through the merest die's turn-up,
 A year ago had seen her and been seen,
 Loved and been loved.

Gui. Impossible!

Gau. — Nor say,
 How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
 Was this which — taking not their stand on facts
 Boldly, for that had been endurable,
 But worming on their way by craft, they choose
 Resort to, rather, — and which you and we,
 Sheep-like, assist them in the playing off!
 The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,
 Not on the honest ground of preference,
 Seeing first, liking more, and there an end —
 But as we all had started equally,
 And at the close of a fair race he proved
 The only valiant, sage and loyal man.
 Herself, too, with the pretty fits and starts, —

The careless, winning, candid ignorance
 Of what the Prince might challenge or forego —
 She had a hero in reserve! What risk
 Ran she? This deferential easy Prince
 Who brings his claims for her to ratify
 — He's just her puppet for the nonce! You'll see, —
 Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
 Against him: off goes the confederate:
 As equitably, Valence takes her hand!

The Chancellor. You run too fast: her hand, no subject takes.
 Do not our archives hold her father's will?
 That will provides against such accident,
 And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion
 Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gau. I know that, well as you, — but does the Prince?
 Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he helps,
 For Valence's ennoblement, — would end,
 If crowned with the success which seems its due,
 In making him the very thing he plays,
 The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree
 That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
 He is next heir.

The Chan. Incontrovertibly.

Gau. Guibert, your match, now, to the train!

Gui. Enough!

I'm with you: selfishness is best again.
 I thought of turning honest — what a dream!
 Let's wake now!

Gau. Selfish, friend, you never were:
 'T was but a series of revenges taken
 On your unselfishness for prospering ill.
 But now that you're grown wiser, what's our course?

Gui. — Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our lady,
 And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,
 Apprise the Prince.

Gau. — The Prince, ere then dismissed
 With thanks for playing his mock part so well?
 Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night —
 Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,
 Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,
 Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!

Gui. — Our lady wedding Valence all the same
 As if the penalty were undisclosed?
 Good! If she loves, she'll not disown her love,
 Throw Valence up. I wonder you see that.

Gau. The shame of it — the suddenness and shame

Within her, the inclining heart — without,
 A terrible array of witnesses —
 And Valence by, to keep her to her word,
 With Berthold's indignation or disgust!
 We'll try it! — Not that we can venture much.
 Her confidence we've lost forever: Berthold's
 Is all to gain.

Gui. To-night, then, venture we!
 Yet — if lost confidence might be renewed?

Gau. Never in noble natures! With the base ones, —
 Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,
 And something grows and grows and gets to be
 A mimic of the lost joint, just so like
 As keeps in mind it never, never will
 Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that:
 But lop the lion's foot — and . . .

Gui. To the Prince!

Gau. [*Aside.*] And come what will to the lion's foot, I pay
 you,

My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay!
 [*Aloud.*] Footsteps! Himself! 'Tis Valence breaks on us,
 Exulting that their scheme succeeds. We'll hence —
 And perfect ours! Consult the archives, first —
 Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall!

Clug. [*to GAUCELME as they retire.*] You have not smiled
 so since your father died!

As they retire, enter VALENCE with papers.

Val. So must it be! I have examined these
 With scarce a palpitating heart — so calm,
 Keeping her image almost wholly off,
 Setting upon myself determined watch,
 Repelling to the uttermost his claims,
 And the result is — all men would pronounce,
 And not I, only, the result to be —
 Berthold is heir; she has no shade of right
 To the distinction which divided us,
 But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,
 Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,
 To serve some devil's-purpose, — now 't is gained,
 Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.
 — Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be?
 Eject it from your heart, her home! — It stays!
 Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!
 — Do my poor townsmen so esteem it? Cleves, —
 I need not your pale faces! This, reward
 For service done to you? Too horrible!

I never served you : 't was myself I served —
 Nay, served not — rather saved from punishment
 Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now !
 My life continues yours, and your life, mine.
 But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step —
 Cleves ! — If I breathe no prayer for it — if she,

[*Footsteps without.*]

Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself —
 Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,
 I . . .

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD.

Pardon, sir ! I did not look for you
 Till night, i' the Hall ; nor have as yet declared
 My judgment to the lady.

Berth. So I hoped.

Val. And yet I scarcely know why that should check
 The frank disclosure of it first to you —
 What her right seems, and what, in consequence,
 She will decide on —

Berth. That I need not ask.

Val. You need not : I have proved the lady's mind —
 And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

Berth. Doubtless she has a very noble mind.

Val. Oh, never fear but she 'll in each conjuncture
 Bear herself bravely ! She no whit depends
 On circumstance ; as she adorns a throne,
 She had adorned . . .

Berth. A cottage — in what book
 Have I read that, of every queen that lived ?
 A throne ! You have not been instructed, sure,
 To forestall my request ?

Val. 'T is granted, sir !
 My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized
 Your claims . . .

Berth. Ah — claims, you mean, at first preferred ?
 I come, before the hour appointed me,
 To pray you let those claims at present rest,
 In favor of a new and stronger one.

Val. You shall not need a stronger : on the part
 O' the lady, all you offer I accept,
 Since one clear right suffices : yours is clear.
 Propose !

Berth. I offer her my hand.

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. A Duke's, yourself say ; and, at no far time,
 Something here whispers me — the Emperor's.

The lady's mind is noble ; which induced
This seizure of occasion, ere my claims
Were — settled, let us amicably say !

Val. Your hand !

Berth. (He will fall down and kiss it next !)

Sir, this astonishment's too flattering,
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap.
Enhance it, rather, — urge that blood is blood —
The daughter of the Burgresses, Landgraves, Markgraves,
Remains their daughter ! I shall scarce gainsay.
Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must rule :
Like the imperial crown's great chrysoprase,
They talk of — somewhat out of keeping there,
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.

Val. You wed the Duchess ?

Berth. Cry you mercy, friend !

Will the match also influence fortunes here ?

A natural solicitude enough.

Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you !

However high you take your present stand,

There's prospect of a higher still remove —

For Juliers will not be my resting-place,

And, when I have to choose a substitute

To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you.

You need not give your mates a character.

And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant

The gray smooth Chamberlain : he'd hesitate

A doubt his lady could demean herself

So low as to accept me. Courage, sir !

I like your method better : feeling's play

Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

Val. I am to say, you love her ?

Berth. Say that too !

Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,

With a Duke's marriage. How go precedents

In Juliers' story — how use Juliers' Dukes ?

I see you have them here in goodly row ;

You must be Luitpold — ay, a stalwart sire !

— Say, I have been arrested suddenly

In my ambition's course, its rocky course,

By this sweet flower : I fain would gather it

And then proceed — so say and speedily

— (Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen self !)

Enough, sir : you possess my mind, I think.

This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,

And to this be it that, i' the Hall to-night,
Your lady's answer comes ; till when, farewell !

[*He retires*

Val. [*after a pause.*] The heavens and earth stay as they
were ; my heart
Beats as it beat : the truth remains the truth.
What falls away, then, if not faith in her ?
Was it my faith, that she could estimate
Love's value, and, such faith still guiding me,
Dare I now test her ? Or grew faith so strong
Solely because no power of test was mine ?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The D. My fate, sir ! Ah, you turn away. All's over.
But you are sorry for me ? Be not so !
What I might have become, and never was,
Regret with me ! What I have merely been,
Rejoice I am no longer ! What I seem
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
I hope that I am ! — for, once my rights proved void,
This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside — my lot henceforth.

Val. And what a lot is Berthold's !

The D.

How of him ?

Val. He gathers earth's whole good into his arms ;
Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,
Marching to fortune, not surprised by her.
One great aim, like a guiding-star, above —
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
His manhood to the height that takes the prize ;
A prize not near — lest overlooking earth
He rashly spring to seize it — nor remote,
So that he rest upon his path content :
But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
To due completion, will suffice this life.
And lead him at his grandest to the grave.
After this star, out of a night he springs ;
A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
He quits : so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,
Nor, as from each to each exultingly
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
This, for his own good : — with the world, each gift
Of God and man, — reality, tradition,
Fancy and fact — so well environ him,

That as a mystic panoply they serve —
 Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
 And work his purpose out with half the world,
 While he, their master, dexterously slipt
 From such encumbrance, is meantime employed
 With his own prowess on the other half.
 Thus shall he prosper, every day's success
 Adding, to what is he, a solid strength —
 An aery might to what encircles him,
 Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,
 That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,
 His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk
 Become a comfort or a portent, how
 He trails his ermine take significance, —
 Till even his power shall cease to be most power,
 And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare
 Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,
 Its typified invincibility.

Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends —
 The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
 The fiery centre of an earthly world !

The D. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise
 Out of my own — that is, above my power
 Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch —

Val. For you ?

The D. It was not I moved there, I think :
 But one I could, — though constantly beside,
 And aye approaching, — still keep distant from,
 And so adore. 'T was a man moved there.

Val. Who ?

The D. I felt the spir't, never saw the face.

Val. See it ! 'T is Berthold's ! He enables you
 To realize your vision.

The D. Berthold ?

Val. Duke —

Emperor to be : he proffers you his hand.

The D. Generous and princely !

Val. He is all of this.

The D. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake. No hand
 Degrades me !

Val. You accept the proffered hand ?

The D. That he should love me !

Val. "Loved" I did not say !

Had that been — love might so incline the Prince
 To the world's good, the world that's at his foot, —
 I do not know, this moment, I should dare

Desire that you refused the world — and Cleves —
The sacrifice he asks.

The D. Not love me, sir?

Val. He scarce affirmed it.

The D. May not deeds affirm?

Val. What does he? . . . Yes, yes, very much he does!

All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved —
Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks, —

Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, perchance!

The D. Is not this love?

Val. So very much he does!

For look, you can descend now gracefully:

All doubts are banished, that the world might have,

Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,

May call up of your heart's sincereness now.

To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule —

Increased it to the utmost of my dreams —

Yet I abjured it." This, he does for you:

It is munificently much.

The D. Still "much!"

But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!

Val. Because not one of Berthold's words and looks

Had gone with love's presentment of a flower

To the beloved: because bold confidence,

Open superiority, free pride —

Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned:

Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,

Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

The D. You reason, then, and doubt?

Val. I love, and know.

The D. You love? — How strange! I never cast a thought

On that! Just see our selfishness! You seemed

So much my own . . . I had no ground — and yet,

I never dreamed another might divide

My power with you, much less exceed it.

Val. Lady,

I am yours wholly.

The D. Oh, no, no, not mine!

'T is not the same now, never more can be.

— Your first love, doubtless. Well, what's gone from me?

What have I lost in you?

Val. My heart replies —

No loss there! So, to Berthold back again:

This offer of his hand, he bids me make —

Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.

The D. She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you!

Val. I am a simple advocate of Cleves.

The D. You! With the heart and brain that so helped me,
I fancied them exclusively my own,
Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!
She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?

Val. Most fair, beyond conception or belief.

The D. Black eyes? — no matter! Colombe, the world leads
Its life without you, whom your friends professed
The only woman — see how true they spoke!
One lived this while, who never saw your face,
Nor heard your voice — unless . . . Is she from Cleves?

Val. Cleves knows her well.

The D. Ah — just a fancy, now!
When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves, — I said,
— Thought, that is, afterward . . .

Val. You thought of me?

The D. Of whom else? Only such great cause, I thought,
For such effect: see what true love can do!
Cleves is his love. I almost fear to ask
. . . And will not. This is idling: to our work!
Admit before the Prince, without reserve,
My claims misgrounded; then may follow better
. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,
Was she in your mind?

Val. All done was done for her
— To humble me!

The D. She will be proud at least.

Val. She?

The D. When you tell her.

Val. That will never be.

The D. How — are there sweeter things you hope to tell?
No, sir! You counselled me, — I counsel you
In the one point I — any woman — can.
Your worth, the first thing; let her own come next —
Say what you did through her, and she through you —
The praises of her beauty afterward!
Will you?

Val. I dare not.

The D. Dare not?

Val. She I love
Suspects not such a love in me.

The D. You jest.

Val. The lady is above me and away.
Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
And the great heart, combine to press me low —
But all the world calls rank divides us.

The D. Rank !
 Now grant me patience ! Here 's a man declares
 Oracularly in another's case —
 Sees the true value and the false, for them —
 Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see.
 You called my court's love worthless — so it turned :
 I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,
 And here you stickle for a piece or two !
 First — has she seen you ?

Val. Yes.

The D. She loves you, then.

Val. One flash of hope burst ; then succeeded night :
 And all 's at darkest now. Impossible !

The D. We 'll try : you are — so to speak — my subject
 yet ?

Val. As ever — to the death.

The D. Obey me, then !

Val. I must.

The D. Approach her, and . . . no ! first of all
 Get more assurance. " My instructress," say,
 " Was great, descended from a line of kings,
 And even fair " — (wait why I say this folly) —
 " She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
 Courage, and " (what cast even these to shade)
 " The heart they sprung from, — none deserved like him
 Who saved her at her need : if she said this,
 What should not one I love, say ? "

Val. Heaven — this hope —
 Oh lady, you are filling me with fire !

The D. Say this ! — nor think I bid you cast aside
 One touch of all the awe and reverence ;
 Nay — make her proud for once to heart's content
 That all this wealth of heart and soul 's her own !
 Think you are all of this, — and, thinking it,
 . . . (Obey !)

Val. I cannot choose.

The D. Then, kneel to her —
 [VALENCE *sinks on his knee.*

I dream !

Val. Have mercy ! Yours, unto the death, —
 I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die !

The D. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus ?
 Even with you as with the world ? I know
 This morning's service was no vulgar deed
 Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
 Explains all done and infinitely more,

So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.

Your service named its true source, — loyalty !

The rest 's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,

Rise, sir ! The Prince's words were in debate.

Val. [*rising.*] Rise ? Truth, as ever, lady, comes from
you !

I should rise — I who spoke for Cleves, can speak

For Man — yet tremble now, who stood firm then.

I laughed — for 't was past tears — that Cleves should starve

With all hearts beating loud the infamy,

And no tongue daring trust as much to air :

Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute ?

Oh lady, for your own sake look on me !

On all I am, and have, and do — heart, brain,

Body and soul, — this Valence and his gifts !

I was proud once : I saw you, and they sank,

So that each, magnified a thousand times,

Were nothing to you — but such nothingness,

Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,

A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance ?

What is my own desert ? But should your love

Have . . . there 's no language helps here . . . singled me, —

Then — oh, that wild word "then !" — be just to love,

In generosity its attribute !

Love, since you pleased to love ! All 's cleared — a stage

For trial of the question kept so long :

Judge you — Is love or vanity the best ?

You, solve it for the world's sake — you, speak first

What all will shout one day — you, vindicate

Our earth and be its angel ! All is said.

Lady, I offer nothing — I am yours :

But, for the cause' sake, look on me and him,

And speak !

The D. I have received the Prince's message :

Say, I prepare my answer !

Val. Take me, Cleves !

[*He withdraws.*]

The D. Mournful — that nothing 's what it calls itself !

Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty — mere love !

And, love in question, what may Berthold's be ?

I did ill to mistrust the world so soon :

Already was this Berthold at my side.

The valley-level has its hawks no doubt :

May not the rock-top have its eagles, too ?

Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then !

ACT V.

Night. SCENE. *The Hall.*

Enter BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.

Mel. And here you wait the matter's issue?

Berth.

Here.

Mel. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then.
But tell me, on this grand disclosure, — how
Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?

Berth.

Oh,

Turned out no better than the foreheadless —
Was dazzled not so very soon, that 's all!
For my part, this is scarce the hasty showy
Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.
Perhaps I had a fancy, — but 't is gone.
— Let her commence the unfriended innocent
And carry wrongs about from court to court?
No, truly! The least shake of fortune's sand,
— My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing fit,
King-cousin takes a fancy to blue eyes, —
And wondrously her claims would brighten up;
Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,
O'er-looked provisoes, o'er-past premises,
Follow in plenty. No: 't is the safe step.
The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost:
Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

Mel. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,
Elude the adventure.

Berth.

Not so — or, if so —

Why not confess at once that I advise
None of our kingly craft and guild just now
To lay, one moment, down their privilege
With the notion they can any time at pleasure
Retake it: that may turn out hazardous.
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque: those favored few
Who keep the chamber's top, and honor's chance
Of the early evening, may retain their place
And figure as they list till out of breath.
But it is growing late: and I observe
A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
Not only bar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws too near;

The ball must die off, shut itself up. We —
 I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,
 And sleep off headache on our frippery :
 But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
 And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
 Means to re-enter with a new costume,
 Will be advised go back to bed. I fear.
 I stick to privilege, on second thoughts.

Mel. Yes — you evade the adventure : and, beside,
 Give yourself out for colder than you are.
 King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes ?
 Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
 With you too ?

Berth. Yes — no : I am past that now.
 Gone 't is : I cannot shut my soul to fact.
 Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance
 Reason myself into a rapture. Gone :
 And something better come instead, no doubt.

Mel. So be it ! Yet, all the same, proceed my way,
 Though to your ends ; so shall you prosper best !
 The lady, — to be won for selfish ends, —
 Will be won easier my unselfish . . . call it,
 Romantic way.

Berth. Won easier ?

Mel. Will not she ?

Berth. There I profess humility without bound :
 Ill cannot speed — not I — the Emperor.

Mel. And I should think the Emperor best waived,
 From your description of her mood and way.
 You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts ;
 But are too indolent and fond of watching
 Your own — you know that, for you study it.

Berth. Had you but seen the orator her friend,
 So bold and voluble an hour before,
 Abashed to earth at aspect of the change !
 Make her an Empress ? Ah, that changed the case !
 Oh, I read hearts ! 'T is for my own behoof,
 I court her with my true worth : wait the event !
 I learned my final lesson on that head
 When years ago, — my first and last essay —
 Before the priest my uncle could by help
 Of his superior, raise me from the dirt —
 Priscilla left me for a Brabant lord
 Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
 I am past illusion on that score.

Mel. Here comes

The lady —

Berth. — And there you go. But do not! Give me
Another chance to please you! Hear me plead!

Mel. You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

Enter the DUCHESS — followed by ADOLF and SABYNE, and after an interval, by the Courtiers.

Berth. Good auspice to our meeting!

The D. May it prove!

— And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?

Berth. (Ay, that's the point!) I may be Emperor.

The D. 'Tis not for my sake only, I am proud

Of this you offer: I am prouder far

That from the highest state should duly spring

The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

Berth. (Generous — still that!) You underrate yourself.

You are, what I, to be complete, must have —

Find now, and may not find, another time.

While I career on all the world for stage,

There needs at home my representative.

The D. — Such, rather, would some warrior-woman be —

One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends —

One like yourself.

Berth. Lady, I am myself,

And have all these: I want what's not myself,

Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords?

Here's one already: be a friend's next gift

A silk glove, if you will — I have a sword.

The D. You love me, then?

Berth. Your lineage I revere,

Honor your virtue, in your truth believe,

Do homage to your intellect, and bow

Before your peerless beauty.

The D. But, for love —

Berth. A further love I do not understand.

Our best course is to say these hideous truths,

And see them, once said, grow endurable:

Like waters shuddering from their central bed,

Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,

That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throes,

A portent and a terror — soon subside,

Freshen apace. take gold and rainbow hues

In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and at last

Grow common to the earth as hills or trees —

Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The D. You cannot love, then?

Berth. — Charlemagne, perhaps!

Are you not over-curious in love-lore?

The D. I have become so, very recently.
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candor promises,
By putting on a calculating mood —
Asking the terms of my becoming yours?

Berth. Let me not do myself injustice, neither.
Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit,
It does not follow that my guarded phrase
May not include far more of what you seek,
Than wide profession of less scrupulous men.
You will be Empress, once for all: with me
The Pope disputes supremacy — you stand,
And none gainsays, the earth's first woman.

The D. That —
Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?

Berth. The matter's not in my arbitrament:
Now I have made my claims — which I regret —
Cede one, cede all.

The D. This claim then, you enforce?

Berth. The world looks on.

The D. And when must I decide?

Berth. When, lady? Have I said thus much so promptly
For nothing? — Poured out, with such pains, at once
What I might else have suffered to ooze forth
Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long —
For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?
All's fairly told now: who can teach you more?

The D. I do not see him.

Berth. I shall ne'er deceive.

This offer should be made befittingly
Did time allow the better setting forth
The good of it, with what is not so good,
Advantage, and disparagement as well:
But as it is, the sum of both must serve.
I am already weary of this place;
My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Decide!
The Empire — or, — not even Juliers now!
Hail to the Empress — farewell to the Duchess!

[*The Courtiers, who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.*]

Gau. — "Farewell," Prince? when we break in at our risk —

Clug. Almost upon court-license trespassing —

Gau. — To point out how your claims are valid yet!
You know not, by the Duke her father's will,
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,

Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favor —
So 't is expressly stipulate. And if
It can be shown 't is her intent to wed
A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right
Succeed to Juliers.

Berth. What insanity? —

Gui. Sir, there's one Valence, the pale fiery man
You saw and heard this morning — thought, no doubt,
Was of considerable standing here:
I put it to your penetration, Prince,
If aught save love, the truest love for her,
Could make him serve the lady as he did!
He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
— Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place
With danger, gets in by a miracle,
And for the first time meets the lady's face —
So runs the story: is that credible?
For, first — no sooner in, than he's apprised
Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,
The lady as powerless: he stands fast by her!

The D. [*Aside.*] And do such deeds spring up from love
alone?

Gui. But here occurs the question, does the lady
Love him again? I say, how else can she?
Can she forget how he stood singly forth
In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
Insult yourself — for what, save love's reward?

The D. [*Aside.*] And is love then the sole reward of love?

Gui. But, love him as she may and must — you ask,
Means she to wed him? "Yes," both natures answer!
Both, in their pride, point out the sole result;
Nought less would he accept nor she propose.
For each conjuncture was she great enough
— Will be, for this.

Clug. Though, now that this is known,
Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The D. — What, sir, and wherefore? — since I am not sure
That all is any other than you say!
You take this Valence, hold him close to me,
Him with his actions: can I choose but look?
I am not sure, love trulier shows itself
Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,
Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus.
Nor am I — (thus made look within myself,
Ere I had dared) — now that the look is dared —
Sure that I do not love him!

Gui.

Hear you, Prince?

Berth. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle mean
Unless to prove with what alacrity
You give your lady's secrets to the world?
How much indebted, for discovering
That quality, you make me, will be found
When there's a keeper for my own to seek.

Courtiers. "Our lady?"

Berth.

— She assuredly remains.

The D. Ah, Prince — and you too can be generous?
You could renounce your power, if this were so,
And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love
Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps exceed
Him, even, in disinterestedness!

Berth. How, lady, should all this affect my purpose?
Your will and choice are still as ever, free.
Say, you have known a worthier than myself
In mind and heart, of happier form and face —
Others must have their birthright: I have gift,
To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.
Against a hundred alien qualities,
I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing:
Wed you the Empire?

The D.

And my heart away?

Berth. When have I made pretension to your heart?
I give none. I shall keep your honor safe;
With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts
You marble woman with the marble rose,
Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
In graceful, slight, silent security.
You will be proud of my world-wide career,
And I content in you the fair and good.
What were the use of planting a few seeds,
The thankless climate never would mature —
Affections all repelled by circumstance?
Enough: to these no credit I attach, —
To what you own, find nothing to object.
Write simply on my requisition's face
What shall content my friends — that you admit,
As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,
Or never need admit them, as my wife —
And either way, all's ended!

The D.

Let all end!

Berth. The requisition!

Gui.

— Valence holds, of course!

Berth. Desire his presence!

[ADOLF goes out.]

Courtiers. [*to each other.*] Out it all comes yet ;
 He'll have his word against the bargain yet :
 He's not the man to tamely acquiesce.
 One passionate appeal — upbraiding even,
 May turn the tide again. Despair not yet ! [*They retire a little.*
Berth. [*to MELCHIOR.*] The Empire has its old success, my
 friend !

Mel. You've had your way : before the spokesman speaks,
 Let me, but this once, work a problem out,
 And ever more be dumb ! The Empire wins ?
 To better purpose have I read my books !

Enter VALENCE.

Mel. [*to the Courtiers.*] Apart, my masters !
 [*To VALENCE.*] Sir, one word with you !
 I am a poor dependant of the Prince's —
 Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence.
 You are no higher, I find : in other words,
 We two, as probably the wisest here,
 Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.
 Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact
 Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them ?
 Do you reply so, and what trouble saved !
 The Prince, then — an embroiled strange heap of news
 This moment reaches him — if true or false,
 All dignity forbids he should inquire
 In person, or by worthier deputy ;
 Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come :
 And so, 't is I am pitched on. You have heard
 His offer to your lady ?

Val. Yes.

Mel. — Conceive
 Her joy thereat ?

Val. I cannot.

Mel. No one can :
 All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Val. [*Aside.*] So !
 No after judgment — no first thought revised —
 Her first and last decision ! — me, she leaves,
 Takes him ; a simple heart is flung aside,
 The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced.
 Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too oft !
 Once, to surprise the angels — twice, that fiends
 Recording, might be proud they chose not so —
 Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world
 All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men
 Can have such chance yet fail so signally,

— But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven,
 Welcome to earth — this taking death for life —
 This spanning love and kneeling to the world —
 Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old !

Mel. Well, on this point, what but an absurd rumor
 Arises — these, its source — its subject, you !
 Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
 They say, your service claims the lady's hand !
 Of course, nor Prince nor lady can respond :
 Yet something must be said : for, were it true
 You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

Val. Well sir, — would ?

Mel. — Not only probably withdraw his suit,
 But, very like, the lady might be forced
 Accept your own. Oh, there are reasons why !
 But you'll excuse at present all save one, —
 I think so. What we want is, your own witness,
 For, or against — her good, or yours : decide !

Val. [*Aside.*] Be it her good if she accounts it so !
 [*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to choose as she ?
 Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
 May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon ?

Mel. [*to the Prince.*] Now to him, you !

Berth. [*to VALENCE.*] My friend acquaints you, sir,
 The noise runs . . .

Val. — Prince, how fortunate are you,
 Wedding her as you will, in spite of noise,
 To show belief in love ! Let her but love you,
 All else you disregard ! What else can be ?
 You know how love is incompatible
 With falsehood — purifies, assimilates
 All other passions to itself.

Mel. Ay, sir :
 But softly ! Where, in the object we select,
 Such love is, perchance, wanting ?

Val. Then indeed,
 What is it you can take ?

Mel. Nay, ask the world !
 Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
 An influence o'er mankind.

Val. When man perceives . . .
 — Ah, I can only speak as for myself !

The D. Speak for yourself !

Val. May I ? — no, I have spoken,
 And time's gone by. Had I seen such an one,
 As I loved her — weighing thoroughly that word —

So should my task be to evolve her love :
If for myself! — if for another — well.

Berth. Heroic truly! And your sole reward, —
The secret pride in yielding up love's right?

Val. Who thought upon reward? And yet how much
Comes after — oh what amplest recompense!

Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory, nought?

— Lady, should such an one have looked on you,

Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world

And say, love can go unrequited here!

You will have blessed him to his whole life's end —

Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,

All goodness cherished where you dwelt — and dwell.

What would he have? He holds you — you, both form

And mind, in his, — where self-love makes such room

For love of you, he would not serve you now

The vulgar way, — repulse your enemies,

Win you new realms, or best, in saving old

Die blissfully — that's past so long ago!

He wishes you no need, thought, care of him —

Your good, by any means, himself unseen,

Away, forgotten! — He gives that life's task up,

As it were . . . but this charge which I return —

[*Offers the requisition, which she takes.*]

Wishing your good.

The D. [*having subscribed it.*] And opportunely, sir —

Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,

Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.

Most on a wedding-day, as mine is too,

Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.

Ask of me!

Berth. He shall have whate'er he asks,

For your sake and his own.

Val. [*Aside.*] If I should ask —

The withered bunch of flowers she wears — perhaps,

One last touch of her hand, I never more

Shall see!

[*After a pause, presenting his paper to the Prince.*]

Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!

Berth. I will, sir.

The D. [*as VALENCE prepares to retire.*] — Nay, do out your
duty, first!

You bore this paper; I have registered

My answer to it: read it and have done!

[*VALENCE reads it.*]

I take him — give up Juliers and the world.

This is my Birthday.

Mel. Berthold, my one hero
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,
Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch, —
Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings!

Berth. [after a pause.] Lady, well rewarded! Sir, as well
deserved!

I could not imitate — I hardly envy —
I do admire you. All is for the best.
Too costly a flower were this, I see it now,
To pluck and set upon my barren helm
To wither — any garish plume will do.
I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy —
You can so well afford to yield it me,
And I were left, without it, sadly off.
As it is — for me — if that will flatter you,
A somewhat wearier life seems to remain
Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life
Begins already! They're too occupied
To listen: and few words content me best.
[Abruptly to the Courtiers.] I am your Duke, though! Who
obey me here?

The D. Adolf and Sabyne follow us —

Gui. [starting from the Courtiers.] — And I?
Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you?
Shall not I get some little duties up
At Ravestein and emulate the rest?
God save you, Gaucelme! 'Tis my Birthday, too!

Berth. You happy handful that remain with me
. . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite
I shall leave over you — will earn your wages,
Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade!
Meantime, — go copy me the precedents
Of every installation, proper styles
And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes —
While I prepare to plod on my old way,
And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

The D. [with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them.]

Come, Valence, to our friends, God's earth . . .

Val. [as she falls into his arms.] — And thee!

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day ;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall," —
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy :
You hardly could suspect —
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon !
The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon

To see your flag-bird flap his vans
 Where I, to heart's desire,
 Perched him ! " The chief's eye flashed ; his plans
 Soared up again like fire.

V.

The chief's eye flashed ; but presently
 Softened itself, as sheathes
 A film the mother-eagle's eye
 When her bruised eaglet breathes ;
 " You 're wounded ! " " Nay," the soldier's pride
 Touched to the quick, he said :
 " I 'm killed, Sire ! " And his chief beside,
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

I.

It was roses, roses, all the way,
 With myrtle mixed in my path like mad :
 The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
 The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
 A year ago on this very day.

II.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
 The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
 Had I said, " Good folk, mere noise repels —
 But give me your sun from yonder skies ! "
 They had answered, " And afterward, what else ? "

III.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
 To give it my loving friends to keep !
 Nought man could do, have I left undone :
 And you see my harvest, what I reap
 This very day, now a year is run.

IV.

There 's nobody on the house-tops now —
 Just a palsied few at the windows set ;
 For the best of the sight is, all allow,

At the Shambles' Gate — or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I throw.

V.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind ;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI.

Thus I entered, and thus I go !
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
Me ?" — God might question ; now instead
'Tis God shall repay : I am safer so.

MY LAST DUCHESS.

FERRARA.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her ? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there ; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not ;
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat : " such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart — how shall I say ? — too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed ; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Sir, 't was all one ! My favor at her breast,
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
 She rode with round the terrace — all and each
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men, — good ! but thanked
 Somehow — I know not how — as if she ranked
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
 With anybody's gift. Who 'd stoop to blame
 This sort of trifling ? Even had you skill
 In speech — (which I have not) — to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, " Just this
 Or that in you disgusts me ; here you miss,
 Or there exceed the mark " — and if she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
 — E'en then would be some stooping ; and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her ; but who passed without
 Much the same smile ? This grew ; I gave commands ;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will 't please you rise ? We 'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretence
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed ;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we 'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me !

COUNT GISMOND.

AIX IN PROVENCE.

I.

Christ God who savest man, save most
 Of men Count Gismond who saved me !
 Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
 Chose time and place and company
 To suit it ; when he struck at length
 My honor, 't was with all his strength.

II.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed !
That miserable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed,
While being dressed in queen's array
To give our tourney prize away.

III.

I thought they loved me, did me grace
To please themselves ; 't was all their deed ;
God makes, or fair or foul, our face ;
If showing mine so caused to bleed
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

IV.

They, too, so beauteous ! Each a queen
By virtue of her brow and breast ;
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
Had either of them spoke, instead
Of glancing sideways with still head !

V.

But no : they let me laugh, and sing
My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs —

VI.

And come out on the morning-troop
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
And called me queen, and made me stoop
Under the canopy — (a streak
That pierced it, of the outside sun,
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun) —

VII.

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My queen's-day — Oh I think the cause

Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

VIII.

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down; 't was time I should present
The victor's crown, but . . . there, 't will last
No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

IX.

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys: I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly — to my face, indeed —
But Gauthier, and he thundered, "Stay!"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

X.

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet
About her! Let her shun the chaste,
Or lay herself before their feet!
Shall she whose body I embraced
A night long, queen it in the day?
For honor's sake no crowns, I say!"

XI.

I? What I answered? As I live,
I never fancied such a thing
As answer possible to give.
What says the body when they spring
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
Strength on it? No more says the soul.

XII.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set
Himself to Satan; who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end?

XIII.

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth

With one back-handed blow that wrote
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart of the joy, with my content
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event :
God took that on him — I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part : I did.

XV.

Did I not watch him while he let
His armorer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while ! His foot . . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground :
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And said, " Here die, but end thy breath
In full confession, lest thou fleet
From my first, to God's second death !
Say, hast thou lied ? " And, " I have lied
To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
— What safe my heart holds, though no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
My powers forever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX.

Over my head his arm he flung
 Against the world ; and scarce I felt
 His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
 A little shifted in its belt :
 For he began to say the while
 How South our home lay many a mile.

XX.

So 'mid the shouting multitude
 We two walked forth to never more
 Return. My cousins have pursued
 Their life, untroubled as before
 I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
 God lighten ! May his soul find grace !

XXI.

Our elder boy has got the clear
 Great brow ; though when his brother's black
 Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here ?
 And have you brought my tercel back ?
 I just was telling Adela
 How many birds it struck since May.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

Morning, evening, noon and night,
 "Praise God !" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
 Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he labored, long and well ;
 O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
 He stopped and sang, "Praise God !"

Then back again his curls he threw,
 And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done ;
 I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

“As well as if thy voice to-day
Were praising God, the Pope’s great way.

“This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
Praises God from Peter’s dome.”

Said Theocrite, “Would God that I
Might praise him, that great way, and die!”

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, “Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight.”

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow’s birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well ;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The man put off the stripling’s hue :

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o’er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God’s will ; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, “A praise is in mine ear ;
There is no doubt in it, no fear :

“So sing old worlds, and so
New worlds that from my footstool go.

“Clearer loves sound other ways :
I miss my little human praise.”

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'T was Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear,
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped —
Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again
The early way, while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ:
Resume the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died :
They sought God side by side.

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

I.

Of the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

II.

I struck him, he grovelled of course —
For, what was his force ?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate :
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse
As his lot might be worse.

III.

“ Were the object less mean, would he stand
At the swing of my hand !
For obscurity helps him and blots
The hole where he squats.”
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain ! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue ;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth :
Still he kept to his filth.

IV.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press :
Just a son or a mother to seize !
No such booty as these.
Were it simply a friend to pursue
’Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself !
No : I could not but smile through my chafe :
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
— Through minuteness, to wit.

V.

Then a humor more great took its place
 At the thought of his face,
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
 The trouble uncouth
 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
 To put out of its pain.
 And, "no!" I admonished myself,
 "Is one mocked by an elf,
 Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
 The gravamen 's in that!
 How the lion, who crouches to suit
 His back to my foot,
 Would admire that I stand in debate!
 But the small turns the great
 If it vexes you, — that is the thing!
 Toad or rat vex the king?
 Though I waste half my realm to unearth
 Toad or rat, 't is well worth!"

VI.

So, I soberly laid my last plan
 To extinguish the man.
 Round his creep-hole, with never a break
 Ran my fires for his sake;
 Over-head, did my thunder combine
 With my under-ground mine:
 Till I looked from my labor content
 To enjoy the event.

VII.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
 Did I say "without friend?"
 Say rather, from marge to blue marge
 The whole sky grew his targe
 With the sun's self for visible boss,
 While an Arm ran across
 Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
 Where the wretch was safe prest!
 Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
 The man sprang to his feet,
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
 — So, *I* was afraid!

MESMERISM.

I.

All I believed is true !
I am able yet
All I want, to get
By a method as strange as new :
Dare I trust the same to you ?

II.

If at night, when doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of smut,
And a cat's in the water-butt —

III.

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares —

IV.

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
Arms and legs outspread,
On the table's midst descends,
Comes to find, God knows what friends ! —

V.

If since eve drew in, I say,
I have sat and brought
(So to speak) my thought
To bear on the woman away,
Till I felt my hair turn gray —

VI.

Till I seemed to have and hold,
In the vacancy
'Twixt the wall and me
From the hair-plait's chestnut-gold
To the foot in its muslin fold —

VII.

Have and hold, then and there,
Her, from head to foot,
Breathing and mute,
Passive and yet aware,
In the grasp of my steady stare —

VIII.

Hold and have, there and then,
All her body and soul
That completes my whole,
All that women add to men,
In the clutch of my steady ken —

IX.

Having and holding, till
I imprint her fast
On the void at last
As the sun does whom he will
By the calotypist's skill —

X.

Then, — if my heart's strength serve,
And through all and each
Of the veils I reach
To her soul and never swerve,
Knitting an iron nerve —

XI.

Command her soul to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance —

XII.

I, still with a gesture fit
Of my hands that best
Do my soul's behest,
Pointing the power from it,
While myself do steadfast sit —

XIII.

Steadfast and still the same
On my object bent,

While the hands give vent
To my ardor and my aim
And break into very flame —

XIV.

Then I reach, I must believe,
Not her soul in vain,
For to me again
It reaches, and past retrieve
Is wound in the toils I weave ;

XV.

And must follow as I require,
As befits a thrall,
Bringing flesh and all,
Essence and earth-attire,
To the source of the tractile fire :

XVI.

Till the house called hers, not mine,
With a growing weight
Seems to suffocate
If she break not its leaden line
And escape from its close confine.

XVII.

Out of doors into the night !
On to the maze
Of the wild wood-ways,
Not turning to left nor right
From the pathway, blind with sight —

XVIII.

Making through rain and wind
O'er the broken shrubs,
'Twixt the stems and stubs,
With a still, composed, strong mind,
Nor a care for the world behind —

XIX.

Swifter and still more swift,
As the crowding peace
Doth to joy increase
In the wide blind eyes uplift
Through the darkness and the drift !

XX.

While I — to the shape, I too
 Feel my soul dilate
 Nor a whit abate,
And relax not a gesture due,
As I see my belief come true.

XXI.

For, there ! have I drawn or no
 Life to that lip ?
 Do my fingers dip
In a flame which again they throw
On the cheek that breaks a-glow ?

XXII.

Ha ! was the hair so first ?
 What, unfilleted,
 Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst,
Chestnut gold-interspersed ?

XXIII.

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
 See, on either side,
 Her two arms divide
Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
Take me, for I am thine !

XXIV.

“ Now — now ” — the door is heard !
 Hark, the stairs ! and near —
 Nearer — and here —
“ Now ! ” and at call the third
She enters without a word.

XXV.

On doth she march and on
 To the fancied shape ;
 It is, past escape,
Herself, now : the dream is done
And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI.

First I will pray. Do Thou
 That ownest the soul,

Yet wilt grant control
To another, nor disallow
For a time, restrain me now !

XXVII.

I admonish me while I may,
Not to squander guilt,
Since require Thou wilt
At my hand its price one day !
What the price is, who can say ?

THE GLOVE.

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.*)

“Heigho,” yawned one day King Francis,
“Distance all value enhances !
When a man ’s busy, why, leisure
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure :
’Faith, and at leisure once is he ?
Straightway he wants to be busy.
Here we ’ve got peace ; and aghast I ’m
Caught thinking war the true pastime.
Is there a reason in metre ?
Give us your speech, master Peter ! ”
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne’er am at loss with my Naso,
“Sire,” I replied, “joys prove cloudlets :
Men are the merest Ixions ” —
Here the King whistled aloud, “Let ’s
. . . Heigho . . . go look at our lions ! ”
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading ;
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold ;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed ’mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most —
Oh, what a face ! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside ;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,

And shelved to the chamber secluded
 Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
 The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
 As glossy and black as a scarab,
 And bade him make sport and at once stir
 Up and out of his den the old monster.
 They opened a hole in the wire-work
 Across it, and dropped there a firework,
 And fled : one's heart's beating redoubled ;
 A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
 The blackness and silence so utter,
 By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter ;
 Then earth in a sudden contortion
 Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
 Such a brute ! Were I friend Clement Marot
 (Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
 And whose faculties move in no small mist
 When he versifies David the Psalmist)
 I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.

One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
 To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
 The tail in the air stiff and straining,
 The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
 As over the barrier which bounded
 His platform, and us who surrounded
 The barrier, they reached and they rested
 O' the space that might stand him in best stead :
 For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
 The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
 And if, in this minute of wonder,
 No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
 Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
 The lion at last was delivered ?
 Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead !
 And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
 By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
 He was leagues in the desert already,
 Driving the flocks up the mountain,
 Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
 To waylay the date-gathering negress :
 So guarded he entrance or egress.
 "How he stands !" quoth the King : "we may well swear,
 (No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere
 And so can afford the confession,)

We exercise wholesome discretion
 In keeping aloof from his threshold ;
 Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
 Their first would too pleasantly purloin
 The visitor's brisket or surloin :
 But who's he would prove so fool-hardy ?
 Not the best man of Marignan, pardie ! ”

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
 Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
 Fell close to the lion, and rested :
 The dame 't was, who flung it and jested
 With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
 For months past ; he sat there pursuing
 His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
 Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier !
 De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
 Walked straight to the glove, — while the lion
 Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
 The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,
 And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir, —
 Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
 Leaped back where the lady was seated,
 And full in the face of its owner
 Flung the glove.

“ Your heart's queen, you dethrone her ?
 So should I ! ” — cried the King — “ 't was mere vanity,
 Not love, set that task to humanity ! ”
 Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
 From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.
 Not so, I ; for I caught an expression
 In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
 Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment, —
 As if from no pleasing experiment
 She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
 So long as the process was needful, —
 As if she had tried in a crucible,
 To what “ speeches like gold ” were reducible,
 And, finding the finest prove copper,
 Felt the smoke in her face was but proper ;
 To know what she had *not* to trust to,
 Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
 She went out 'mid hooting and laughter ;
 Clement Marot stayed ; I followed after,

And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
 If she wished not the rash deed's recalcit?
 "For I" — so I spoke — "am a poet:
 Human nature, — behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard
 Of the deed proved alone by the word:
 For my love — what De Lorge would not dare!
 With my scorn — what De Lorge could compare!
 And the endless descriptions of death
 He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
 I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
 Doubt his word — and moreover, perforce,
 For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
 Must offer my love in return.
 When I looked on your lion, it brought
 All the dangers at once to my thought,
 Encountered by all sorts of men,
 Before he was lodged in his den, —
 From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
 Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
 With no King and no Court to applaud,
 By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
 Yet to capture the creature made shift,
 That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
 — To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
 Of the pit, on no greater pretence
 Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
 Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
 So, wiser I judged it to make
 One trial what 'death for my sake'
 Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
 Than to wait until time should define
 Such a phrase not so simply as I,
 Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
 The blow a glove gives is but weak:
 Does the mark yet discolor my cheek?
 But when the heart suffers a blow,
 Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
 And saw a youth eagerly keeping
 As close as he dared to the doorway.
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh
 His life than befits a plebeian;
 And yet, had our brute been Nemean —

(I judge by a certain calm fervor
 The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
 — He 'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn
 If you whispered, " Friend, what you 'd get, first earn !"
 And when, shortly after, she carried
 Her shame from the Court, and they married,
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy ;
 And in short stood so plain a head taller
 That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her ?
 The beauty, that rose in the sequel
 To the King's love, who loved her a week well.
 And 't was noticed he never would honor
 De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
 With the easy commission of stretching
 His legs in the service, and fetching
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
 While the King took the closet to chat in, —
 But of course this adventure came pat in.
 And never the King told the story,
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,
 But the wife smiled — " His nerves are grown firmer :
 Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."

Venienti occurrite morbo !

With which moral I drop my theorbo.

TIME'S REVENGES.

I 've a Friend, over the sea ;
 I like him, but he loves me.
 It all grew out of the books I write ;
 They find such favor in his sight
 That he slaughters you with savage looks
 Because you don't admire my books.
 He does himself though, — and if some vein
 Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
 Round should I just turn quietly,
 Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
 Till I found him, come from his foreign land
 To be my nurse in this poor place,

And make my broth and wash my face
And light my fire and, all the while,
Bear with his old good-humored smile
That I told him "Better have kept away
Than come and kill me, night and day,
With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
The creaking of his clumsy boots."
I am as sure that this he would do,
As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
And I think I rather . . . woe is me !

— Yes, rather should see him than not see,
If lifting a hand would seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think nor read,
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen ; this garret 's freezing cold !

And I 've a Lady — there he wakes,
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and outward-borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be !
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint
And my style infirm and its figures faint,
All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get.
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends !
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
— So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in
With the face of her, the eyes of her,
The lips, the little chin, the stir

Of shadow round her mouth ; and she
— I'll tell you — calmly would decree
That I should roast at a slow fire,
If that would compass her desire
And make her one whom they invite
To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven ; there must be hell ;
Meantime, there is our earth here — well !

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND.

That second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds through the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace, —
I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping through the moss they love :
— How long it seems since Charles was lost !
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight ;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal fires ; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days ; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize ; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine ;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too ;

For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew ; when these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance : she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
One instant rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground :
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt ;
She picked my glove up while she stripped
A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that ; my glove lay in her breast :
Then I drew breath ; they disappeared :
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts ; on me
Rested the hopes of Italy ;
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 't was told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth ;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm —
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
“ I am that man upon whose head
They fix the price, because I hate
The Austrians over us : the State
Will give you gold — oh, gold so much ! —
If you betray me to their clutch,
And be your death, for aught I know,
If once they find you saved their foe.
Now, you must bring me food and drink,
And also paper, pen and ink,
And carry safe what I shall write
To Padua, which you 'll reach at night
Before the duomo shuts ; go in,
And wait till Tenebræ begin ;
Walk to the third confessional,

Between the pillar and the wall,
And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
Say it a second time, then cease;
And if the voice inside returns,
From Christ and Freedom; what concerns
The cause of Peace? — for answer, slip
My letter where you placed your lip;
Then come back happy we have done
Our mother service — I, the son,
As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sunrise
Than of her coming: we conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover — stout and tall,
She said — then let her eyelids fall,
"He could do much" — as if some doubt
Entered her heart, — then, passing out,
"She could not speak for others, who
Had other thoughts; herself she knew:"
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head — "This faith was shown
To Italy, our mother; she
Uses my hand and blesses thee."
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning — much less wished for — aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, what shall now convince
My inmost heart I have a friend?
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself — say, three —
I know at least what one should be.
I would grasp Metternich until

I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood through these two hands. And next,
— Nor much for that am I perplexed —
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
— Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
— Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so — perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine —
Are turning wise: while some opine
"Freedom grows license," some suspect
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen "All's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes — just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing — how
It steals the time! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY.

PIANO DI SORRENTO.

Fortù, Fortù, my beloved one,
Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet !
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Sirocco.
Now, open your eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads ;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
— The flowers or the weeds.
Time for rain ! for your long hot dry Autumn
Had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the bunches,
Marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account of,
Whose heads, — speckled white
Over brown like a great spider's back,
As I told you last night, —
Your mother bites off for her supper.
Red-ripe as could be,
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
In halves on the tree :
And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone,
Or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
Wherever could thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
Its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
Some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And look through the twisted dead vine-twigs,
Sole lattice that 's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,

While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover :
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff,
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.
No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
— Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and gray jellies, your sea-fruit ;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps ;
Himself too as bare to the middle
— You see round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back, to a man,
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards
Grape-harvest began.
In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
Like blood the juice spins,
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing
Till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten in effort on effort
To keep the grapes under,
Since still when he seems all but master,
In pours the fresh plunder
From girls who keep coming and going
With basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rain's driving ;
Your girls that are older, —
For under the hedges of aloe,
And where, on its bed
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple

Lies pulpy and red,
All the young ones are kneeling and filling
Their laps with the snails
Tempted out by this first rainy weather, —
Your best of regales,
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
When, supping in state,
We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,
Three over one plate)
With lasagne so tempting to swallow
In slippery ropes,
And gourds fried in great purple slices,
That color of popes.
Meantime, see the grape bunch they've brought you :
The rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
Which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence :
Nay, taste, while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
That peels, flake by flake,
Like an onion, each smoother and whiter ;
Next, sip this weak wine
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine ;
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves through its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.
Sirocco is loose !
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
Though not yet half black !
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,
The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,
For here comes the whole of the tempest !
No refuge, but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,
And listen or sleep.
O, how will your country show next week,
When all the vine-boughs
Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
The mules and the cows ?
Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;

Your brother, my guide,
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
That offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious, —
Or strip from the sorbs
A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
Those hairy gold orbs!
But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
Just stopping to neigh,
When he recognized down in the valley
His mates on their way
With the faggots and barrels of water ;
And soon we emerged
From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow ;
And still as we urged
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
As up still we trudged,
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
And place was e'en grudged
'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
Like the loose broken teeth
Of some monster which climbed there to die
From the ocean beneath —
Place was grudged to the silver-gray fume-weed
That clung to the path,
And dark rosemary ever a-dying
That, 'spite the wind's wrath,
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
And lentisks as staunch
To the stone where they root and bear berries,
And . . . what shows a branch
Coral-colored, transparent, with circlets
Of pale seagreen leaves ;
Over all trod my mule with the caution
Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
Still, foot after foot like a lady :
So, round after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano,
And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal !
No rampart excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived

In the blue solitudes.
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!
Still moving with you;
For, ever some new head and breast of them
Thrusts into view
To observe the intruder; you see it
If quickly you turn
And, before they escape you, surprise them
They grudge you should learn
How the soft plains they look on, lean over
And love (they pretend)
— Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches,
The wild fruit-trees bend,
E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut:
All is silent and grave:
'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty,
How fair! but a slave.
So, I turned to the sea; and there slumbered
As greenly as ever
Those isles of the siren, your Galli;
No ages can sever
The Three, nor enable their sister
To join them, — halfway
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses —
No farther to-day,
Though the small one, just launched in the wave,
Watches breast-high and steady
From under the rock, her bold sister
Swum halfway already.
Fortù, shall we sail there together
And see from the sides
Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts
Where the siren abides?
Shall we sail round and round them, close over
The rocks, though unseen,
That ruffle the gray glassy water
To glorious green?
Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
Reach land and explore,
On the largest, the strange square black turret
With never a door,
Just a loop to admit the quick lizards;
Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear?
— The secret they sang to Ulysses

When, ages ago,
He heard and he knew this life's secret
I hear and I know.

Ah, see ! The sun breaks o'er Calvano ;
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
In airy gold fume.
All is over. Look out, see the gypsy,
Our tinker and smith,
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
And down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering, under the wall there ;
One eye keeps aloof
The urchins that itch to be putting
His jews'-harps to proof,
While the other, through locks of curled wire,
Is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall
— An abbot's own cheek.
All is over. Wake up and come out now,
And down let us go,
And see the fine things got in order
At church for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening ;
To-morrow 's the Feast
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
Of Virgins the least,
As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse
Which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother, these three weeks,
Was getting by heart.
Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd
With red and blue papers ;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
Ablaze with long tapers ;
But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
Rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
And trumpeters bold,
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
Who, when the priest 's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that 's brisk
For the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
Be carried in pomp

Through the Plain, while in gallant procession
 The priests mean to stomp.
 All round the glad church lie old bottles
 With gunpowder stopped,
 Which will be, when the Image re-enters,
 Religiously popped ;
 And at night from the crest of Calvano
 Great bonfires will hang,
 On the Plain will the trumpets join chorus,
 And more poppers bang.
 At all events, come — to the garden
 As far as the wall ;
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
 Till out there shall fall
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers !

— “ Such trifles ! ” you say ?
 Fortù, in my England at home,
 Men meet gravely to-day
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
 Be righteous and wise
 — If ’t were proper, Sirocco should vanish
 In black from the skies !

IN A GONDOLA.

He sings.

I send my heart up to thee, all my heart
 In this my singing.
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears part ;
 The very night is clinging
 Closer to Venice’ streets to leave one space
 Above me, whence thy face
 May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
 My very words, as if each word
 Came from you of your own accord,
 In your own voice, in your own way :
 “ This woman’s heart and soul and brain
 Are mine as much as this gold chain
 She bids me wear ; which ” (say again)
 “ I choose to make by cherishing
 A precious thing, or choose to fling

Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
 And yet once more say . . . no word more!
 Since words are only words. Gave o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same,
 Familiarly by my pet name,
 Which if the Three should hear you call,
 And me reply to, would proclaim
 At once our secret to them all.
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame —
 Do, break down the partition-wall
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
 What's left but — all of me to take?
 I am the Three's: prevent them, slake
 Your thirst! 'T is said, the Arab sage
 In practising with gems can loose
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce
 And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,
 Leave them my ashes when thy use
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings.

I.

Past we glide, and past, and past!
 What's that poor Agnese doing
 Where they make the shutters fast?
 Gray Zanobi's just a-wooing
 To his couch the purchased bride:
 Past we glide!

II.

Past we glide, and past, and past!
 Why 's the Pucci Palace flaring
 Like a beacon to the blast?
 Guests by hundreds, not one caring
 If the dear host's neck were wried:
 Past we glide!

She sings.

I.

The moth's kiss, first!
 Kiss me as if you made believe
 You were not sure, this eve,

How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

II.

The bee's kiss, now !
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

I.

What are we two ?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe ;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision forever ! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou !

II.

Say again, what we are ?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering away
Some . . . Scatter the vision forever ! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou !

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?
The land's lap or the water's breast ?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must ;
Which life were best on Summer eves ?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back ; could thought of mine improve you ?
 From this shoulder let there spring
 A wing ; from this, another wing ;
 Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you !
 Snow-white must they spring, to blend
 With your flesh, but I intend
 They shall deepen to the end,
 Broader, into burning gold,
 Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
 Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
 To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
 As if a million sword-blades hurled
 Defiance from you to the world !

Rescue me thou, the only real !
 And scare away this mad ideal
 That came, nor motions to depart !
 Thanks ! Now, stay ever as thou art !

Still he muses.

I.

What if the Three should catch at last
 Thy serenader ? While there's cast
 Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
 Gian pinions me, Himself has past
 His stylet through my back ; I reel ;
 And . . . is it thou I feel ?

II.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
 Past every church that saints and saves,
 Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
 By Lido's wet accursed graves,
 They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
 And . . . on thy breast I sink !

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
 As I do : thus : were death so unlike sleep,
 Caught this way ? Death's to fear from flame or steel,
 Or poison doubtless ; but from water — feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay me ? There !
 Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass

To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away : since you have praised my hair,
'T is proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home ? must we row home ? Too surely
Know I where its front's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled ;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All's the set face of a child :
But behind it, where's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face ?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead !
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you —
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach,
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again !

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine ! What should your chamber do ?
— With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you

Who brought against their will together
 These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
 Around them such a magic tether
 That dumb they look : your harp, believe,
 With all the sensitive tight strings
 Which dare not speak, now to itself
 Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
 Went in and out the chords, his wings
 Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
 As an angel may, between the maze
 Of midnight palace-pillars, on
 And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
 Through guilty glorious Babylon.
 And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
 Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
 As the dry limpet for the lymph
 Come with a tune he knows so well.
 And how your statues' hearts must swell !
 And how your pictures must descend
 To see each other, friend with friend !
 Oh, could you take them by surprise,
 You 'd find Schidone's eager Duke
 Doing the quaintest courtesies
 To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke !
 And, deeper into her rock den,
 Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
 You 'd find retreated from the ken
 Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser —
 As if the Tizian thinks of her,
 And is not, rather, gravely bent
 On seeing for himself what toys
 Are these, his progeny invent,
 What litter now the board employs
 Whereon he signed a document
 That got him murdered ! Each enjoys
 Its night so well, you cannot break
 The sport up, so, indeed must make
 More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks.

I.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
 Is used to tie the jasmine back
 That overfloods my room with sweets,
 Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets

Zanze! If the ribbon's black,
The Three are watching: keep away!

II.

Your gondola — let Zorzi wreath
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me?
Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, "All thanks, Siora!" —

Heart to heart

And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art!

He is surprised, and stabbed.

It was ordained to be so, sweet! — and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived: but I
Have lived indeed, and so — (yet one more kiss) — can die!

WARING.

I.

I.

What's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town?

II.

Who 'd have guessed it from his lip
 Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
 On the night he thus took ship
 Or started landward? — little caring
 For us, it seems, who supped together
 (Friends of his too, I remember)
 And walked home through the merry weather,
 The snowiest in all December.
 I left his arm that night myself
 For what 's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
 Who wrote the book there, on the shelf —
 How, forsooth, was I to know it
 If Waring meant to glide away
 Like a ghost at break of day?
 Never looked he half so gay!

III.

He was prouder than the devil:
 How he must have cursed our revel!
 Ay and many other meetings,
 Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
 As up and down he paced this London,
 With no work done, but great works undone,
 Where scarce twenty knew his name.
 Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
 Written, bustled? Who's to blame
 If your silence kept unbroken?
 "True, but there were sundry jottings,
 Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,
 Certain first steps were achieved
 Already which" — (is that your meaning?)
 Had well borne out whoe'er believed
 In more to come!" But who goes gleaning
 Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved
 Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
 Pride alone, puts forth such claims
 O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
 I find out now I've lost him.
 I who cared not if I moved him,
 Who could so carelessly accost him,
 Henceforth never shall get free
 Of his ghostly company,

His eyes that just a little wink
 As deep I go into the merit
 Of this and that distinguished spirit —
 His cheeks' raised color, soon to sink,
 As long I dwell on some stupendous
 And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
 Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
 Demoniac-seraphic
 Penman's latest piece of graphic.
 Nay, my very wrist grows warm
 With his dragging weight of arm.
 E'en so, swimmingly appears,
 Through one's after-supper musings,
 Some lost lady of old years
 With her beauteous vain endeavor
 And goodness unrepaid as ever;
 The face, accustomed to refusings,
 We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
 Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
 Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
 Telling aught but honest truth to?
 What a sin, had we centupled
 Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
 No! she heard in its completeness
 Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
 And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!
 Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt
 From damning us through such a sally;
 And so she glides, as down a valley,
 Taking up with her contempt,
 Past our reach; and in the flowers
 Shut her unregarded hours.

V.

Oh, could I have him back once more,
 This Waring, but one half-day more!
 Back, with the quiet face of yore,
 So hungry for acknowledgment
 Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
 Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
 I'd say, "to only have conceived,
 Planned your great works, apart from progress,
 Surpasses little works achieved!"
 I'd lie so, I should be believed.
 I'd make such havoc of the claims
 Of the day's distinguished names

To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
 Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child !
 Or as one feasts a creature rarely
 Captured here, unreconciled
 To capture ; and completely gives
 Its pettish humors license, barely
 Requiring that it lives.

VI.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
 The glory is departed !
 Travels Waring East away ?
 Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
 Reports a man upstarted
 Somewhere as a god,
 Hordes grown European-hearted,
 Millions of the wild made tame
 On a sudden at his fame ?
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?
 Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
 With the demurest of footfalls
 Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
 With serpentine and syenite,
 Steps, with five other Generals
 That simultaneously take snuff,
 For each to have pretext enough
 And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
 Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
 To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
 And leave the grand white neck no gash ?
 Waring in Moscow, to those rough
 Cold northern natures born perhaps,
 Like the lambwhite maiden dear
 From the circle of mute kings
 Unable to repress the tear,
 Each as his sceptre down he flings,
 To Dian's fane at Taurica,
 Where now a captive priestess, she alway
 Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
 With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach
 As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
 Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
 Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
 Amid their barbarous twitter !
 In Russia ? Never ! Spain were fitter !
 Ay, most likely 't is in Spain

That we and Waring meet again.
 Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
 Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
 All fire and shine, abrupt as when there 's slid
 Its stiff gold blazing pall
 From some black coffin-lid.
 Or, best of all,
 I love to think
 The leaving us was just a feint ;
 Back here to London did he slink,
 And now works on without a wink
 Of sleep, and we are on the brink
 Of something great in fresco-paint :
 Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
 Up and down and o'er and o'er
 He splashes, as none splashed before
 Since great Caldara Polidore.
 Or Music means this land of ours
 Some favor yet, to pity won
 By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers, —
 "Give me my so-long promised son,
 Let Waring end what I begun !"
 Then down he creeps and out he steals
 Only when the night conceals
 His face ; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
 Or hops are picking : or at prime
 Of March he wanders as, too happy,
 Years ago when he was young,
 Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
 And the early moths had sprung
 To life from many a trembling sheath
 Woven the warm boughs beneath ;
 While small birds said to themselves
 What should soon be actual song,
 And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
 Made as if they were the throng
 That crowd around and carry aloft
 The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,
 Out of a myriad noises soft,
 Into a tone that can endure
 Amid the noise of a July noon
 When all God's creatures crave their boon,
 All at once and all in tune,
 And get it, happy as Waring then,
 Having first within his ken
 What a man might do with men :

And far too glad, in the even-glow,
 To mix with the world he meant to take
 Into his hand, he told you, so —
 And out of it his world to make,
 To contract and to expand
 As he shut or oped his hand.
 O Waring, what 's to really be?
 A clear stage and a crowd to see!
 Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
 The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck.
 Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
 Some Junius — am I right? — shall tuck
 His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
 Some Chatterton shall have the luck
 Of calling Rowley into life!
 Some one shall somehow run a-muck
 With this old world for want of strife
 Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
 To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?
 Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
 Distinguished names! — but 't is, somehow,
 As if they played at being names
 Still more distinguished, like the games
 Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
 With a visage of the sternest!
 Bring the real times back, confessed
 Still better than our very best!

II.

I.

"When I last saw Waring . . ."
 (How all turned to him who spoke!
 You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
 In land-travel or sea-faring?)

II.

"We were sailing by Triest
 Where a day or two we harbored:
 A sunset was in the West,
 When, looking over the vessel's side,
 One of our company espied
 A sudden speck to larboard.
 And as a sea-duck flies and swims
 At once, so came the light craft up,

With its sole lateen sail that trims
 And turns (the water round its rims
 Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
 And by us like a fish it curled,
 And drew itself up close beside,
 Its great sail on the instant furled,
 And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
 (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
 'Buy wine of us, you English brig?
 Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
 A pilot for you to Triest?
 Without one, look you ne'er so big,
 They 'll never let you up the bay!
 We natives should know best.'
 I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,
 Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
 Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

III.

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
 And one, half-hidden by his side
 Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
 With great grass hat and kerchief black
 Who looked up with his kingly throat
 Said somewhat, while the other shook
 His hair back from his eyes to look
 Their longest at us; then the boat,
 I know not how, turned sharply round,
 Laying her whole side on the sea
 As a leaping fish does; from the lee
 Into the weather, cut somehow
 Her sparkling path beneath our bow
 And so went off, as with a bound,
 Into the rosy and golden half
 O' the sky, to overtake the sun
 And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
 Its singing cave; yet I caught one
 Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
 And neither time nor toil could mar
 Those features: so I saw the last
 Of Waring!" — You? Oh, never star
 Was lost here but it rose afar!
 Look East, where whole new thousands are!
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

THE TWINS.

“Give” and “It-shall-be-given-unto-you.”

I.

Grand rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables — flowers on furze,
The better the uncouthier :
Do roses stick like burrs ?

II.

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther ; but, seized with qualms,
The Abbot replied, “ We ’re poor !

III.

“ Poor, who had plenty once,
When gifts fell thick as rain :
But they give us nought, for the nonce,
And how should we give again ? ”

IV.

Then the beggar, “ See your sins !
Of old, unless I err,
Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
Date and Dabitur.

V.

“ While Date was in good case
Dabitur flourished too :
For Dabitur’s lenten face
No wonder if Date rue.

VI.

“ Would ye retrieve the one ?
Try and make plump the other !
When Date’s penance is done,
Dabitur helps his brother.

VII.

“ Only, beware relapse ! ”
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be perhaps
An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN.

I.

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us three? —
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me?

II.

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose,
And over him drew her net.

III.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth for a whim!

IV.

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at a wren instead!

V.

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

VI.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
— You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

VII.

For see, my friend goes shaking and white;
He eyes me as the basilisk:
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

VIII.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
“ Though I love her — that, he comprehends —

One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
And be loyal to one's friends ! ”

IX.

And she, — she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall ;
Just a touch to try and off it came ;
'T is mine, — can I let it fall ?

X.

With no mind to eat it, that 's the worst !
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist ?
'T was quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI.

And I, — what I seem to my friend, you see ;
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess :
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me ?
No hero, I confess.

XII.

'T is an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own :
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone !

XIII.

One likes to show the truth for the truth ;
That the woman was light is very true :
But suppose she says, — Never mind that youth !
What wrong have I done to you ?

XIV.

Well, anyhow, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand ;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here 's a subject made to your hand !

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

I.

I said — Then, dearest, since 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,

Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,

 Since this was written and needs must be —
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness !
Take back the hope you gave, — I claim
Only a memory of the same,
— And this beside, if you will not blame,
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II.

My mistress bent that brow of hers ;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two

 With life or death in the balance : right !
The blood replenished me again ;
My last thought was at least not vain :
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.

 Who knows but the world may end to-night ?

III.

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions — sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once —

 And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here ! —
Thus leant she and lingered — joy and fear !

 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.

 What need to strive with a life awry ?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me ? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell !
Where had I been now if the worst befell ?

 And here we are riding. she and I.

V.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
 Why, all men strive, and who succeeds.
 We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
 Saw other regions, cities new,
 As the world rushed by on either side.
 I thought, — All labor, yet no less
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
 Look at the end of work, contrast
 The petty done, the undone vast,
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
 I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

VI.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
 What heart alike conceived and dared?
 What act proved all its thought had been?
 What will but felt the fleshy screen?
 We ride and I see her bosom heave.
 There 's many a crown for who can reach.
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
 A soldier's doing! what atones?
 They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones,
 My riding is better, by their leave.

VII.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
 What we felt only; you expressed
 You hold things beautiful the best,
 And place them in rhyme so, side by side.
 'T is something, nay 't is much: but then,
 Have you yourself what 's best for men?
 Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —
 Nearer one whit your own sublime
 Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
 Sing, riding 's a joy! For me I ride.

VIII.

And you, great sculptor — so, you gave
 A score of years to Art, her slave,
 And that 's your Venus, whence we turn
 To yonder girl that fords the burn!
 You acquiesce, and shall I repine?

What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being — had I signed the bond —
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride!

X.

And yet — she has not spoke so long! —
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life forever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity, —
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, forever ride?

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN;

A CHILD'S STORY.

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE YOUNGER.)

I.

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;

But, when begins my ditty,
 Almost five hundred years ago,
 To see the townsfolk suffer so
 From vermin, was a pity.

II.

Rats !
 They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
 And bit the babies in the cradles,
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
 And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
 And even spoiled the women's chats,
 By drowning their speaking
 With shrieking and squeaking
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

III.

At last the people in a body
 To the Town Hall came flocking :
 " 'Tis clear," cried they, " our Mayor 's a noddy ;
 And as for our Corporation — shocking
 To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
 For dolts that can't or won't determine
 What 's best to rid us of our vermin !
 You hope, because you 're old and obese,
 To find in the furry civic robe ease ?
 Rouse up, sirs ! Give your brains a racking
 To find the remedy we 're lacking,
 Or, sure as fate, we 'll send you packing ! "
 At this the Mayor and Corporation
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sat in council ;
 At length the Mayor broke silence :
 " For a guilder I 'd my ermine gown sell,
 I wish I were a mile hence !
 It 's easy to bid one rack one's brain —
 I 'm sure my poor head aches again,
 I 've scratched it so, and all in vain.
 Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! "
 Just as he said this, what should hap
 At the chamber-door but a gentle tap ?
 " Bless us," cried the Mayor, " what 's that ? "

(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat ;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
“ Only a scraping of shoes on the mat ?
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat ! ”

V.

“ Come in ! ” — the Mayor cried, looking bigger :
And in did come the strangest figure !
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in ;
There was no guessing his kith and kin :
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one : “ It ’s as my great-grandsire,
Starting up at the Trump of Doom’s tone,
Had walked this way from his painted tomb-stone ! ”

VI.

He advanced to the council-table :
And, “ Please your honors,” said he, “ I ’m able,
By means of a secret charm, to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep or swim or fly or run,
After me so as you never saw !
And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,
The mole and toad and newt and viper ;
And people call me the Pied Piper.”
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque ;
And at the scarf’s end hung a pipe ;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)

“ Yet,” said he, “ poor piper as I am,
 In Tartary I freed the Cham,
 Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
 I eased in Asia the Nizam
 Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats:
 And as for what your brain bewilders,
 If I can rid your town of rats
 Will you give me a thousand guilders? ”
 “ One? fifty thousand! ” — was the exclamation
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,
 Smiling first a little smile,
 As if he knew what magic slept
 In his quiet pipe the while;
 Then, like a musical adept,
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
 Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
 You heard as if an army muttered;
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
 Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
 Families by tens and dozens,
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives —
 Followed the Piper for their lives.
 From street to street he piped advancing,
 And step for step they followed dancing,
 Until they came to the river Weser
 Wherein all plunged and perished!
 — Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
 Swam across and lived to carry
 (As he, the manuscript he cherished)
 To Rat-land home his commentary:
 Which was, “ At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
 I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
 And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
 Into a cider-press’s gripe:
 And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,

And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
And it seemed as if a voice
(Sweeter far than bý harp or bý psaltery
Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!'
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
All ready staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious scarce an inch before me,
Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!'
— I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats!" — when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

IX.

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gypsy coat of red and yellow!
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
"Our business was done at the river's brink;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what's dead can't come to life. I think.
So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
From the duty of giving you something for drink,
And a matter of money to put in your poke;
But as for the guilders, what we spoke
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

X.

The Piper's face fell, and he cried
 "No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
 I've promised to visit by dinner time
 Bagdat, and accept the prime
 Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
 For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
 Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
 With him I proved no bargain-driver,
 With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
 And folks who put me in a passion
 May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI.

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook
 Being worse treated than a Cook?
 Insulted by a lazy ribald
 With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
 You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
 Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

XII.

Once more he stept into the street,
 And to his lips again
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
 Never gave the enraptured air)
 There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling;
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
 Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,
 And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
 Out came the children running.
 All the little boys and girls,
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
 As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
 Unable to move a step, or cry
 To the children merrily skipping by,

— Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters !
However, he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed ;
Great was the joy in every breast.
" He never can cross that mighty top !
He 's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop ! "
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way ;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say, —
" It 's dull in our town since my playmates left !
I can't forget that I 'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me.
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new ;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles' wings :
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more ! "

XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,

Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.

But when they saw 't was a lost endeavor,
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,
They made a decree that lawyers never

Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here

On the Twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street —
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labor.

Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbors lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

XV.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men — especially pipers !
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise !

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

I.

You 're my friend :
I was the man the Duke spoke to ;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too ;
So, here 's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend !

II.

Ours is a great wild country :
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop ;
For when you've passed the cornfield country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein
Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;
Look right, look left, look straight before, —
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
— And the whole is our Duke's country.

III.

I was born the day this present Duke was —
(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)
In the castle where the other Duke was —
(When I was happy and young, not old !)
I in the kennel, he in the bower :
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was huntsman in that day ;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he 'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?
And that 's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call ;
That 's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born.
" And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, " since
The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
Needs the Duke's self at his side : "
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And " ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume :
— They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage !

They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin !
(Hark, the wind 's on the heath at its game !
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !)
Had they croached a cask of white beer from Berlin
— Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And rosy with sweet, — we shall not quarrel.

IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who :
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V.

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape ;
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You 'd say, he despised our bluff old ways ?
— Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North-land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days ;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it ;
'T was not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out :

And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
 On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
 With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
 — They should have set him on red Berold
 With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
 And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire !

VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :
 And out of a convent, at the word,
 Came the lady, in time of spring.
 — Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
 That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
 I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
 Fit for the chase of urox or buffle
 In winter-time when you need to muffle.
 But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
 And so we saw the lady arrive :
 My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !
 She was the smallest lady alive,
 Made in a piece of nature's madness,
 Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
 That over-filled her, as some hive
 Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
 Is crowded with its safe merry bees :
 In truth, she was not hard to please !
 Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
 Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
 To look at from outside the walls :
 As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
 She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
 (With her eyes, do you understand ?)
 Because I patted her horse while I led it ;
 And Max, who rode on her other hand,
 Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
 What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired —
 If that was an eagle she saw hover,
 And the green and gray bird on the field was the plover.
 When suddenly appeared the Duke :
 And as down she sprang, the small foot pointed
 On to my hand, — as with a rebuke,
 And as if his backbone were not jointed,
 The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
 And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;
 And, mind you, his mother all the while
 Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;

And up, like a weary yawn, with its pulleys
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown gray ;
For such things must begin some one day.

VII.

In a day or two she was well again ;
As who should say, " You labor in vain !
This is all a jest against God, who meant
I should ever be, as I am, content
And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I will be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire —
Could not rest, could not tire —
To a stone she might have given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day)
— For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one !
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule — (but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise.
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame :
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike him !
So found the Duke, and his mother like him :

The lady hardly got a rebuff —
 That had not been contemptuous enough,
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX.

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
 Paling and ever paling,
 As the way is with a hid chagrin ;
 And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
 And said in his heart, " 'T is done to spite me,
 But I shall find in my power to right me ! "
 Don't swear, friend ! The old one, many a year,
 Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

X.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
 When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
 A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice,
 That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
 Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
 And another and another, and faster and faster,
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled :
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
 Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
 And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
 He should do the Middle Age no treason
 In resolving on a hunting-party.
 Always provided, old books showed the way of it !
 What meant old poets by their strictures ?
 And when old poets had said their say of it,
 How taught old painters in their pictures ?
 We must revert to the proper channels,
 Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
 And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions :
 Here was food for our various ambitions,
 As on each case, exactly stated —
 To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
 Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup —
 We of the household took thought and debated.
 Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
 His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
 Blessedder he who nobly sunk " ohs "
 And " ahs " while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose ;
 What signified hats if they had no rims on,
 Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,

And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on't!

XI.

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided,
Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
"When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
In a clean ewer with a fair towelling,
Let her preside at the disembowelling."
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;
And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing?
— I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified
In what a pleasure she was to participate, —
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,

So, thanking him, declined the hunting, —
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled —
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled, —
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
And when she persisted nevertheless, —
Well, I suppose here 's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was held decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened through all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she? — Who was she? — Her duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation —
In brief, my friends, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her, — making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase — oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII.

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,

And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might cut as an axe chops a log —
Like so much wool for color and bulkiness ;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under ;
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gypsies on their march ?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII.

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned :
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth — not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it —
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards ;
Or, if your colt's forefoot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle ;
But the sand — they pinch and pound it like otters ;
Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and potters !
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die

A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters :
Such are the works they put their hand to,
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.
And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune,
The oldest Gypsy then above ground ;
And, sure as the autumn season came round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding :
And then, as of old, at the end of the humming
Her usual presents were forthcoming
— A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouthpiece to screw on a pipe-end, —
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
A word in reply ; and in vain she felt
With twitching fingers at her belt
For the purse of sleek pine-marten pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe, —
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,

She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning —
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;
If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
He was contrasting, 't was plain from his gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew near
He told the crone — as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery —
The main of the lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude:
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gypsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To while away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what 's to be told you

Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising :
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement :
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's :
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry ;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken :
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV.

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it :
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
— Jacynth forgive me the comparison !
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt through the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one tree.
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested

By — was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber? — and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door ;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen — the Gypsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the lady's head and face intent :
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees,
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
— Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or bell clappers.
I said, is it blessing, is it banning,
Do they applaud you or burlesque you —
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on ?
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the lady's expression :
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
— Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
— Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving,
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened :
When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,

Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world,
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gypsy said : —

“ And so at last we find my tribe.
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey through,
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain :
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark ;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so dear and dark,
Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that round young cheek of thine
I make them recognize the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen
Still through the mixture shall be seen.
For so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest —
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure ;
Like a jewel-finder's fierce essay

Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb —
Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part
And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
So, trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms forevermore;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve!
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy;
Not a power of life but we employ
To satisfy thy nature's want;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree —
Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done;
Though each apart were never so weak,
Ye vainly through the world should seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right:
So, to approach at least that end,
And blend, — as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee, —
As climbing plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway?
I foresee and could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well:
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,

Let them say what thou shalt do!
 Only be sure thy daily life,
 In its peace or in its strife,
 Never shall be unobserved;
 We pursue thy whole career,
 And hope for it, or doubt, or fear, —
 Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
 We are beside thee in all thy ways,
 With our blame, with our praise,
 Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
 Glad, angry — but indifferent, no!
 Whether it be thy lot to go,
 For the good of us all, where the haters meet
 In the crowded city's horrible street;
 Or thou step alone through the morass
 Where never sound yet was
 Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
 For the air is still, and the water still,
 When the blue breast of the dipping coot
 Dives under, and all is mute.
 So, at the last shall come old age,
 Decrepit as befits that stage;
 How else wouldst thou retire apart
 With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
 And gather all to the very least
 Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
 Let fall through eagerness to find
 The crowning dainties yet behind?
 Ponder on the entire past
 Laid together thus at last,
 When the twilight helps to fuse
 The first fresh with the faded hues,
 And the outline of the whole,
 As round eve's shades their framework roll,
 Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
 And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
 Of yet another morning breaks,
 And like the hand which ends a dream,
 Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
 Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
 Then — "

Ay, then indeed something would happen!
 But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;
 There grew more of the music and less of the words;
 Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
 To paper and put you down every syllable

With those clever clerkly fingers,
All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
— More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks !
But to return from this excursion, —
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap —
And the charm vanished !
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep ; and but one spring made I
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered, —
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess : I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding ;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her ; the crone
Followed silent and alone ;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style ; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits ; her stature shrunk ;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding ;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding ;

All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry ;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it.
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me, —
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gypsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
— Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me, —
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom, — mark, her bosom —
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood, — that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward, — I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear. each for the other's sake, —
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then, — and then, — to cut short, — this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster, —

I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded, — and so we lost her.

XVI.

When the liquor's out why clink the cannikin?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib.
When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness
— But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the lady away!
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me — and no doubt makes you — sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
She that kept it in constant good-humor,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
So, they made no search and small inquiry —
And when fresh Gypsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favor you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster

Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse :
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII.

You're my friend —
What a thing friendship is, world without end !
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids —
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids ;
Each supple a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.
I have seen my little lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before ;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it :
And now it is made — why, my heart's blood, that went trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets.
I'll tell you what I intend to do :
I must see this fellow his sad life through —
He is our Duke, after all,
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with ;
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and get done with :
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter,
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,
Then I shall scrape together my earnings ;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,
And our children all went the way of the roses :
It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in ;

So, just one stout cloak shall I indue :
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you ?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skiful.
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly !
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age ? He must hurry more, that's all ;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold :
When we mind labor, then only, we're too old —
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul ?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gypsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with — as if by accident —
“ You never knew then, how it all ended,
What fortune good or bad attended
The little lady your Queen befriended ? ”
— And when that's told me, what's remaining ?
This world's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine,
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a lady's scorne !
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau :
Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.
— So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good night ;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen !

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL,

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE.

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
 Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
 Cared-for till cock-crow:
 Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row!
 That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
 Rarer, intenser,
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censer.
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
 Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
 Crowded with culture!
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
 Clouds overcome it;
 No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit.
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
 Wait ye the warning?
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;
 He's for the morning.
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
 'Ware the beholders!
 This is our master, famous, calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
 Safe from the weather!
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo!
 Long he lived nameless: how should Spring take note
 Winter would follow?
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
 Cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!
 My dance is finished?"

No, that's the world's way : (keep the mountain-side,
 Make for the city !)
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
 Over men's pity ;
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world
 Bent on escaping :
 "What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled ?
 Show me their shaping,
 Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage, —
 Give ! " — So, he gowned him,
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page :
 Learned, we found him.
 Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain :
 "Time to taste life," another would have said,
 "Up with the curtain !"
 This man said rather, "Actual life comes next ?
 Patience a moment !
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
 Still there's the comment.
 Let me know all ! Prate not of most or least,
 Painful or easy !
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
 Ay, nor feel queasy."
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
 When he had learned it,
 When he had gathered all books had to give !
 Sooner, he spurned it.
 Image the whole, then execute the parts —
 Fancy the fabric
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here's the town-gate reached : there's the market-place
 Gaping before us.)
 Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus !)
 That before living he'd learn how to live —
 No end to learning :
 Earn the means first — God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning.
 Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes :
 Live now or never !"
 He said, "What's time ? Leave Now for dogs and apes !
 Man has Forever."
 Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head :
 Calculus racked him :

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead :
Tussis attacked him.
 "Now, master, take a little rest!" — not he!
 (Caution redoubled,
 Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly¹)
 Not a whit troubled,
 Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
 Fierce as a dragon
 He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
 Sucked at the flagon.
 Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
 Heedless of far gain,
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
 Bad is our bargain!
 Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
 (He loves the burthen) —
 God's task to make the heavenly period
 Perfect the earthen?
 Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
 Just what it all meant?
 He would not discount life, as fools do here,
 Paid by instalment.
 He ventured neck or nothing — heaven's success
 Found, or earth's failure:
 "Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes!
 Hence with life's pale lure!"
 That low man seeks a little thing to do,
 Sees it and does it:
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
 Dies ere he knows it.
 That low man goes on adding one to one,
 His hundred's soon hit:
 This high man, aiming at a million,
 Misses an unit.
 That, has the world here — should he need the next,
 Let the world mind him!
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
 Seeking shall find him.
 So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
 Ground he at grammar;
 Still, through the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
 While he could stammer
 He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be! —
 Properly based *Oum* —
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
 Dead from the waist down.

Well, here 's the platform, here 's the proper place :
 Hail to your purlieus,
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
 Swallows and curlews !
 Here 's the top-peak ; the multitude below
 Live, for they can, there :
 This man decided not to Live but Know —
 Bury this man there ?
 Here — here 's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
 Lightnings are loosened,
 Stars come and go ! Let joy break with the storm,
 Peace let the dew send !
 Lofty designs must close in like effects :
 Loftily lying,
 Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,
 Living and dying.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

ROSA MUNDI ; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER
 GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR,
 YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN
 SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-
 Molay, at Paris, A. D. 1314 ; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish
 brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

I.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

The Lord, we look to once for all,
 Is the Lord we should look at, all at once :
 He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,
 Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
 See him no other than as he is !
 Give both the infinitudes their due —
 Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
 As infinite a justice too.
 As infinite a justice too.

[*Organ : plagal-cadence.*

II.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
 What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin :
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
 They bring him now to be burned alive.
*[And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye shall say
 to confirm him who singeth —*
 We bring John now to be burned alive.

III.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built ;
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck ;
 But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
 Make a trench all round with the city muck ;
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store ;
 Fagots not few, blocks great and small,
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more, —
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

IV.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith ;
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow ;
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow :
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
 Sing " Laudes " and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS.

Laus Deo — who bids clap-to the torch.

V.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
 Is burning alive in Paris square !
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged ?
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there ?

Or heave his chest, while a band goes round?
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?
 — Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[Here one crosseth himself.

VI.

Jesus Christ — John had bought and sold,
 Jesus Christ — John had eaten and drunk;
 To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(Salva reverentia.)
 Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,
 I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me!
 See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
 Art thou a saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, "Save thou me!"

VII.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?
 — Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
 Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird? —
 For she too prattles of ugly names.
 — Saith, he knoweth but one thing, — what he knows?
 That God is good and the rest is breath;
 Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose?
 Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

Oh, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

VIII.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
 Some, honeyed of taste like your leman's tongue:
 Some, bitter; for why? (roast gayly on!)
 Their tree struck root in devil's dung.
 When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
 And of temperance and of judgment to come,
 Good Felix trembled, he could no less:
 John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

IX.

Ha ha, John plucketh now at his rose
 To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!
 Lo, — petal on petal, fierce rays uncloset;
 Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;

And with blood for dew, the bosom boils ;
 And a gust of sulphur is all its smell ;
 And lo, he is horribly in the toils
 Of a coal-black giant flower of hell !

CHORUS.

What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

X.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
 On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life —
 To the Person, he bought and sold again —
 For the Face, with his daily buffets rife —
 Feature by feature It took its place :
 And his voice, like a mad dog's choking bark,
 At the steady whole of the Judge's face —
 Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark !

HOLY-CROSS DAY.

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL
 CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME.

[“Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews : as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now maternally brought — nay, (for He saith, ‘Compel them to come in’) haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience ! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion ; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him : though not to my lord be altogether the glory.” — *Diary by the Bishop's Secretary*, 1600.]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect : —

I.

Fee, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak !
 Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
 Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
 Stinking and savory, smug and gruff,
 Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
 Gives us the summons — 't is sermon-time !

II.

Boh, here 's Barnabas! Job, that 's you?
Up stumps Solomon — bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
Fair play 's a jewel! Leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church!

III.

Higgledy piggedly, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcass, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop — here he comes.

IV.

Bow, wow, wow — a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

V.

Aaron 's asleep — shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch!
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingumbob!
What 's he at, quotha? reading his text!
Now you 've his curtsey — and what comes next?

VI.

See to our converts — you doomed black dozen —
No stealing away — nor cog nor cozen!
You five, that were thieves, deserve it fairly;
You seven, that were beggars, will live less sparely;
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune — and fortune gets you; mind that!

VII.

Give your first groan — compunction 's at work;
And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah, — the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in!

Here's a knife, clip quick — it's a sign of grace —
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

VIII.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at ?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades —
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

IX.

Groan all together now, whee — hee — hee !
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me !
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist ;
Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds :
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed :
And it overflows, when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

XI.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime, —
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

XII.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, " This world has been harsh and strange ;
Something is wrong : there needeth a change.
But what, or where ? at the last or first ?
In one point only we sinned, at worst.

XIII.

" The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.

When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

XIV.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place :
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph forevermore ?

XV.

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep :
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world, — at watch and ward,
Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By his servant Moses the watch was set :
Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

XVI.

"Thou ! if thou wast he, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight, naming a dubious name !
And if, too heavy with sleep — too rash
With fear — O thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on thee coming to take thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne —

XVII.

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the Judgment over, join sides with us !
Thine too is the cause ! and not more thine
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed !

XVIII.

"We withstood Christ then ? Be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now !
Was our outrage sore ? But the worst we spared,
To have called these — Christians, had we dared !
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary !

XIX.

“ By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
 By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
 By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
 By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
 By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
 And the summons to Christian fellowship, —

XX.

“ We boast our proof that at least the Jew
 Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
 Thy face took never so deep a shade
 But we fought them in it, God our aid !
 A trophy to bear, as we march, thy band,
 South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land ! ” *

PROTUS.

Among these latter busts we count by scores,
 Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
 Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
 Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast, —
 One loves a baby face, with violets there,
 Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
 As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. “ Protus ends a period
 Of empery beginning with a god ;
 Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant,
 Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant :
 And if he quickened breath there, 't would like fire
 Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
 A fame that he was missing, spread afar :
 The world, from its four corners, rose in war,
 Till he was borne out on a balcony
 To pacify the world when it should see.
 The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
 Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
 And day by day more beautiful he grew
 In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
 While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child
 Became, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.
 Already sages labored to condense

* The present Pope abolished this bad business of the Sermon. -- R. B.

In easy tomes a life's experience :
 And artists took grave counsel to impart
 In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art —
 To make his graces prompt as blossoming
 Of plentifully-watered palms in spring :
 Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,
 For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
 And mortals love the letters of his name."

— Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same
 New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
 How that same year, on such a month and day,
 "John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
 A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved
 The Empire from its fate the year before. —
 Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore
 The same for six years, (during which the Huns
 Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons
 Put something in his liquor" — and so forth.
 Then a new reign. Stay — "Take at its just worth"
 (Subjoins an annotator) "what I give
 As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus live
 And slip away. 'T is said, he reached man's age
 At some blind northern court; made, first a page,
 Then tutor to the children; last, of use
 About the hunting-stables. I deduce
 He wrote the little tract 'On worming dogs,'
 Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
 Is extant yet. A Protus of the race
 Is rumored to have died a monk in Thrace, —
 And if the same, he reached senility."

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great eye,
 Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can
 To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

There's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
 And a statue watches it from the square,
 And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
 At the farthest window facing the East
 Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased ;
She leaned forth, one on either hand ;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased —

They felt by its beats her heart expand —
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back — "Who is she?"
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure —
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure —
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, —
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can ;
She looked at him, as one who awakes :
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime, which may God requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued —

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor —
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride —
"Your window and its world suffice,"
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied —

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
And I save my soul — but not to-morrow" —

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
"My father tarries to bless my state:
I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'T was a very funeral,
Your lady will think, this feast of ours, —
A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And try if Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, "Too much favor for me so mean!

"But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
Each wind that comes from the Apennine
Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
If she quits her palace twice this year,
To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself — "Which night shall bring
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool —
Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool —
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

“I need thee still and might miss perchance.
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady’s countenance :

“For I ride — what should I do but ride ?
And passing her palace, if I list,
May glance at its window — well betide !”

So said, so done : nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow’s sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love’s brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth :
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter’s dearth
By store of fruits that supplant the rose :
The world and its ways have a certain worth :

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy ; better wait :
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover’s fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate !

And she — she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook :

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years ; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream ;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above :
But who can take a dream for a truth ?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove !

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked, —
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass —
“Summon here,” she suddenly said,
Before the rest of my old self pass,

“Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
Who fashions the clay no love will change,
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

“Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range.

“Make me a face on the window there,
Waiting as ever, mute the while,
My love to pass below in the square !

“And let me think that it may beguile
Dreary days which the dead must spend
Down in their darkness under the aisle,

“To say, ‘What matters it at the end ?
I did no more while my heart was warm
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’

“Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
And the blood that blues the inside arm —

“Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine ?
A lady of clay is as good, I trow.”

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine —

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face —

Eying ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by —)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "Youth — my dream escapes!
Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes —
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?"

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,
Set me on horseback here aloft,
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:
That men may admire, when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze —
Admire and say, 'When he was alive
How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
At idleness which aspires to strive."

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss —
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way through the world to this.

I hear you reproach, " But delay was best,
For their end was a crime." — Oh, a crime will do
As well. I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view !

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf ?
Where a button goes, 't were an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham :
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table 's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play ! — is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will !

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin :
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you ? *De te, fabula !*

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER.

The rain set early in to-night,
 The sullen wind was soon awake,
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
 And did its worst to vex the lake,
 I listened with heart fit to break.
 When glided in Porphyria ; straight
 She shut the cold out and the storm,
 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm ;
 Which done, she rose, and from her form
 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
 And, last, she sat down by my side
 And called me. When no voice replied,
 She put my arm about her waist,
 And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
 And all her yellow hair displaced,
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
 And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
 Murmuring how she loved me — she
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
 To set its struggling passion free
 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
 And give herself to me forever.
 But passion sometimes would prevail,
 Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
 A sudden thought of one so pale
 For love of her, and all in vain :
 So, she was come through wind and rain.
 Be sure I looked up at her eyes
 Happy and proud ; at last I knew
 Porphyria worshipped me ; surprise
 Made my heart swell, and still it grew
 While I debated what to do.
 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
 Perfectly pure and good : I found
 A thing to do, and all her hair
 In one long yellow string I wound
 Three times her little throat around,
 And strangled her. No pain felt she ;
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.
 As a shut bud that holds a bee,

I warily oped her lids : again
 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
 And I untightened next the tress
 About her neck ; her cheek once more
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss :
 I propped her head up as before,
 Only, this time my shoulder bore
 Her head, which droops upon it still :
 The smiling rosy little head,
 So glad it has its utmost will,
 That all it scorned at once is fled,
 And I, its love, am gained instead !
 Porphyria's love : she guessed not how
 Her darling one wish would be heard.
 And thus we sit together now,
 And all night long we have not stirred,
 And yet God has not said a word !

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME.”

(See Edgar's song in “*LEAR*.”)

I.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
 Askance to watch the working of his lie
 On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
 Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
 Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II.

What else should he be set for, with his staff ?
 What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
 All travellers who might find him posted there,
 And ask the road ? I guessed what skull-like laugh
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
 I did turn as he pointed : neither pride
 Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
 So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out through years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring, —
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V.

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears, and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;")

VI.

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves !
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band" — to wit,
he knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
heir steps — that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now — should I be fit?

VIII.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX.

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 't was gone ; gray plain all round :

Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on ; nought else remained to do.

X.

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature ; nothing throve :
For flowers — as well expect a cedar grove !
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You 'd think ; a burr had been a treasure trove.

XI.

No ! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. " See
Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
" It nothing skills : I cannot help my case :
'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped ; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk
All hope of greenness ? 't is a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy ; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there :
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud !

XIV.

Alive ? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane ;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe ;
I never saw a brute I hated so ;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,

I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards — the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII.

Giles then, the soul of honor — there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good — but the scene shifts — faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

XVIII.

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send an owlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX.

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof — to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI.

Which, while I forded, — good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard !
— It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh ! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage !
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash ? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage —

XXIII.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose ?
No footprint leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV.

And more than that — a furlong on — why, there !
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel — that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk ? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with ; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes !) within a rood —
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, colored gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils ;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him

Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII.

And just as far as ever from the end !
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further ! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap — perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains — with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me, — solve it, you !
How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX.

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me. God knows when —
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts — you 're inside the den !

XXX.

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place ! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight ;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Duncce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight !

XXXI.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself ?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII.

Not see ? because of night perhaps ? — why, day
Came back again for that ! before it left,

The dying sunset kindled through a cleft :
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —
“ Now stab and end the creature — to the heft ! ”

XXXIII.

Not hear ? when noise was everywhere ! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
Of all the lost adventurers my peers, —
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost ! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV.

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture ! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew “ *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.* ”

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

ACT FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S
LIFE ; AND ACT SECOND, ITS PROSE.

LONDON, 1846

PERSONS.

LUITOLFO and EULALIA, betrothed lovers.
CHIAPPINO, their friend
OGNIBEN, the Pope's Legate.
Citizens of Faenza.

TIME, 15—. PLACE, FAENZA.

ACT I.

Inside LUITOLFO'S house. CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night's fast falling,
And 't was scarce sunset . . . had the ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's house?
I think not: all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble — should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Ch. That's good!

Eu. You laugh!

Ch. Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears price
In the whole world was left to call my own;
And, maybe, felt a little pride thereat.
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
There's nothing mine, I fancied, — till you spoke:
— Counting, you see, as "nothing" the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence: well, go silence with the rest
Of the world's good! What can I say, shall serve?

Eu. This, — lest you, even more than needs, embitter
Our parting : say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit !

Ch. How a cloud ?

Eu. No man nor woman loves you, did you say ?

Ch. My God, were 't not for thee !

Eu. Ay, God remains

Even did men forsake you.

Ch. Oh, not so !

Were 't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth —
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with man ?

I, now — the homeless friendless penniless

Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you, —

Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,

(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies

About your friendship and Luitolfo's courage

And all our townsfolk's equanimity —

Through sheer incompetence to rid myself

Of the old miserable lying trick

Caught from the liars I have lived with, — God,

Did I not turn to thee ! It is thy prompting

I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel

Would die along my coward lip, I know.

But I do turn to thee. This craven tongue,

These features which refuse the soul its way,

Reclaim thou ! Give me truth — truth, power to speak

— And after be sole present to approve

The spoken truth ! Or, stay, that spoken truth,

Who knows but you, too, may approve ?

Eu.

Ah, well —

Keep silence then, Chiappino !

Ch.

You would hear, —

You shall now — why the thing we please to style

My gratitude to you and all your friends

For service done me, is just gratitude

So much as yours was service — and no more.

I was born here, so was Luitolfo ; both

At one time, much with the same circumstance

Of rank and wealth ; and both, up to this night

Of parting company, have side by side

Still fared, he in the sunshine — I, the shadow.

" Why ? " asks the world. " Because," replies the world

To its complacent self, " these playfellows,

Who took at church the holy-water drop

Each from the other's finger, and so forth, —

Were of two moods : Luitolfo was the proper

Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
 Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.
 A happy-tempered bringer of the best
 Out of the worst ; who bears with what's past cure,
 And puts so good a face on 't — wisely passive
 Where action's fruitless, while he remedies
 In silence what the foolish rail against ;
 A man to smooth such natures as parade
 Of opposition must exasperate ;
 No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
 Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
 At lucky junctures ; one who won't forego
 The after-battle work of binding wounds,
 Because, forsooth he'd have to bring himself
 To side with wound-inflictors for their leave ! ”
 — Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
 What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
 About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend ?

Eu. Because, that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Ch.

I thought

You would be readier with the other half
 Of the world's story, my half ! Yet, 't is true.
 For all the world does say it. Say your worst !
 True, I thank God, I ever said “ you sin,”
 When a man did sin : if I could not say it,
 I glared it at him ; if I could not glare it,
 I prayed against him ; then my part seemed over.
 God's may begin yet : so it will, I trust.

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we ?

Ch.

What's “ me ”

That you use well or ill ? It's man, in me,
 All your successes are an outrage to,
 You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say !
 Here's our Faenza birthplace ; they send here
 A provost from Ravenna : how he rules,
 You can at times be eloquent about.
 “ Then, end his rule ! ” — “ Ah yes, one stroke does that !
 But patience under wrong works slow and sure.
 Must violence still bring peace forth ? He, beside,
 Returns so blandly one's obeisance ! ah —
 Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
 Some human sympathy which, once excite,
 And all the lump were leavened quietly :
 So, no more talk of striking, for this time ! ”
 But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
 These pretty takings-up and layings-down

Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.
 Enough of earnest, is there? You'll play, will you?
 Diversify your tactics, give submission,
 Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,
 While we die in our misery patient deaths?
 We all are outraged then, and I the first:
 I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
 Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,
 I hate!

Eu. We share a common censure, then.
 'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
 Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, lady?
 Come, on your own ground, lady, — from yourself,
 (Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine)
 What have I got to be so grateful for?
 These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
 Paid by Luitolfo?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino!

Ch. Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most!
 — Which is to see. He paid my fines — my friend,
 Your prosperous smooth lover presently,
 Then, scarce your wooer, — soon, your husband: well —
 I loved you.

Eu. Hold!

Ch. You knew it, years ago.
 When my voice faltered and my eye grew dim
 Because you gave me your silk mask to hold —
 My voice that greatens when there's need to curse
 The people's Provost to their heart's content,
 — My eye, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
 Banishes now because he cannot bear, —
 You knew . . . but you do your parts — my part, I:
 So be it! You flourish, I decay: all's well.

Eu. I hear this for the first time.

Ch. The fault's there?

Then my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
 Were voiceless? Then the very heart may burst
 Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
 Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus?
 Eulalia, truce with toying for this once!
 A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
 For the last time — why, what's to fear from me?
 You knew I loved you!

Eu. Not so, on my faith!

You were my now-affianced lover's friend —
 Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.
 All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit;
 See how your words come from you in a crowd!
 Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself
 In all that challenges respect and love:
 Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.
 I say all this by fascination, sure:
 I am all but wed to one I love, yet listen!
 It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
 Luitolfo pities . . .

Ch. — You too pity? Do!
 But hear first what my wrongs are; so began
 This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
 Was't not enough that I must strive (I saw)
 To grow so far familiar with your charms
 As next contrive some way to win them — which
 To do, an age seemed far too little — for, see!
 We all aspire to heaven; and there is heaven
 Above us: go there! Dare we go? no, surely!
 How dare we go without a reverent pause,
 A growing less unfit for heaven? Even so,
 I dared not speak: the greater fool, it seems!
 Was't not enough to struggle with such folly,
 But I must have, beside, the very man
 Whose slight free loose and incapacious soul
 Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
 — Must have him load me with his benefits
 For fortune's fiercest stroke?

Eu. Justice to him
 That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
 Justice for you! Did he once call those acts
 Of simple friendship — bounties, benefits?

Ch. No: the straight course had been to call them so.
 Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
 Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
 We both sought. But "the gold was dross," he said:
 "He loved me, and I loved him not: why spurn
 A trifle out of superfluity?
 He had forgotten he had done as much."
 So had not I! Henceforth, try as I could
 To take him at his word, there stood by you
 My benefactor; who might speak and laugh
 And urge his nothings, even banter me
 Before you — but my tongue was tied. A dream!
 Let's wake: your husband . . . how you shake at that!
 Good — my revenge!

Eu. Why should I shake? What forced
Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride?

Ch. There's my revenge, that nothing forces you.
No gratitude, no liking of the eye
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
Of habit — here so many times he came,
So much he spoke, — all these compose the tie
That pulls you from me. Well, he paid my fines,
Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table;
He spoke a good word to the Provost here,
Held me up when my fortunes fell away,
— It had not looked so well to let me drop, —
Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
Whose boughs they played beneath — much more a friend.
But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
Like me. I could not change: you know the rest:
I've spoke my mind too fully out, by chance,
This morning to our Provost; so, ere night
I leave the city on pain of death. And now
On my account there's gallant intercession
Goes forward — that's so graceful; — and anon
He'll noisily come back: "the intercession
Was made and fails; all's over for us both;
'T is vain contending; I would better go."
And I do go — and straight to you he turns
Light of a load; and ease of that permits
His visage to repair the natural bland
Economy, sore broken late to suit
My discontent. Thus, all are pleased — you, with him,
He with himself, and all of you with me
— "Who," say the citizens, "had done far better
In letting people sleep upon their woes,
If not possessed with talent to relieve them
When once awake; — but then I had," they'll say,
"Doubtless some unknown compensating pride
In what I did; and as I seem content
With ruining myself, why, so should they be."
And so they are, and so be with his prize
The devil, when he gets them speedily!
Why does not your Luitolfo come? I long
To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
It seems you never loved me, then?

Eu. Chiappino!

Ch. Never?

Eu. Never.

Ch. That 's sad. Say what I might,
 There was no help from being sure this while
 You loved me. Love like mine must have return,
 I thought : no river starts but to some sea.
 And had you loved me, I could soon devise
 Some specious reason why you stifled love,
 Some fancied self-denial on your part,
 Which made you choose Luitolfo ; so, excepting
 From the wide condemnation of all here,
 One woman. Well, the other dream may break !
 If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
 Loved me, though in the vilest breast 't were lodged,
 I should, I think, be forced to love again :
 Else there 's no right nor reason in the world.

Eu. "If you knew," say you, — but I did not know.
 That 's where you 're blind, Chiappino ! — a disease
 Which if I may remove, I 'll not repent
 The listening to. You cannot, will not, see
 How, place you but in every circumstance
 Of us, you are just now indignant at,
 You 'd be as we.

Ch. I should be? . . . that ; again !
 I, to my friend, my country and my love,
 Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines ?

Eu. As we.

Ch. Now, I 'll say something to remember.
 I trust in nature for the stable laws
 Of beauty and utility — Spring shall plant,
 And Autumn garner to the end of time :
 I trust in God — the right shall be the right
 And other than the wrong, while he endures :
 I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
 The outward and the inward, nature's good
 And God's : so, seeing these men and myself,
 Having a right to speak, thus do I speak. —
 I 'll not curse — God bears with them, well may I —
 But I — protest against their claiming me.
 I simply say, if that 's allowable,
 I would not (broadly) do as they have done.
 — God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,
 Branded into the blood and bone, slaves ! Curse
 Whoever loves, above his liberty,
 House, land or life ! and . . . [*A knocking without.*]
 — bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo !

Eu. How he knocks !

Ch. The peril, lady !
 " Chiappino, I have run a risk — a risk !
 For when I prayed the Provost (he 's my friend)
 To grant you a week's respite of the sentence
 That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself,
 He shrugged his shoulder — I say, shrugged it ! Yes,
 And fright of that drove all else from my head.
 Here 's a good purse of *scudi* : off with you,
 Lest of that shrug come what God only knows !
 The *scudi* — friend, they 're trash — no thanks, I beg !
 Take the north gate, — for San Vitale's suburb,
 Whose double taxes you appealed against,
 In discomposure at your ill-success
 Is apt to stone you : there, there — only go !
 Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.
 Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my wrist !"
 — Is it not thus you 'll speak, adventurous friend ?

[*As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in, his garments disordered.*]

Eul. Luitolfo ! Blood ?

Luit.

There's more — and more of it !

Eulalia — take the garment ! No — you, friend !

You take it and the blood from me — you dare !

Eul. Oh, who has hurt you ? where's the wound ?

Ch.

" Who," say you ?

The man with many a touch of virtue yet !

The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,

And this comes of it. Miserable hound !

This comes of temporizing, as I said !

Here 's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft looks !

Now see my way ! As God lives, I go straight

To the palace and do justice, once for all !

Luit. What says he ?

Ch.

I 'll do justice on him.

Luit.

Him ?

Ch. The Provost.

Luit.

I 've just killed him.

Eul.

Oh, my God !

Luit. My friend, they 're on my trace ; they 'll have me —
 now !

They 're round him, busy with him : soon they 'll find

He 's past their help, and then they 'll be on me !

Chiappino, save Eulalia ! I forget . . .

Were you not bound for . . .

Ch.

Lugo ?

Luit.

Ah — yes — yes !

That was the point I prayed of him to change.

Well, go — be happy! Is Eulalia safe?

They're on me!

Ch. 'Tis through me they reach you, then!

Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms — that's right!

Now tell me what you've done; explain how you

That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,

Could bring yourself . . .

Luit. What was peace for, Chiappino?

I tried peace: did that promise, when peace failed,

Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days

Were just the prelude to a day like this.

I cried "You call me 'friend': save my true friend!

Save him, or lose me!"

Ch. But you never said

You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.

Luit. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?

Ch. Well? He persisted?

Luit. — "Would so order it

You should not trouble him too soon again."

I saw a meaning in his eye and lip;

I poured my heart's store of indignant words

Out on him: then — I know not! He retorted,

And I . . . some staff lay there to hand — I think

He bade his servants thrust me out — I struck . . .

Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!

The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!

The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!

Eu. They do come! Torches in the Place! Farewell,

Chiappino! You can work no good to us —

Much to yourself; believe not, all the world

Must needs be cursed henceforth!

Ch. And you?

Eu. I stay.

Ch. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master here!

This was my coarse disguise; this paper shows

My path of flight and place of refuge — see —

Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo,

Ferrara, then to Venice and all's safe!

Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch

A compass round about. There's time enough

Ere they can reach us, so you straightway make

For Lugo . . . nay, he hears not! On with it —

The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See —

He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I must —

Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?

Eu. The northwest gate, over the bridge?

Luit.

I know.

Ch. Well, there — you are not frightened? all my route
Is traced in that: at Venice you escape
Their power. Eulalia, I am master here!

[*Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, who complies mechanically.*]

In time! Nay, help me with him — so! He's gone.

Eu. What have you done? On you, perchance, all know
The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall
As our accomplice.

Ch. Mere accomplice? See!

[*Putting on LUITOLFO's vest.*]

Now, lady, am I true to my profession,
Or one of these?

Eu. You take Luitolfo's place?

Ch. Die for him.

Eu. Well done! [Shouts increase.]

Ch. How the people tarry!

I can't be silent; I must speak: or sing —
How natural to sing now!

Eu. Hush and pray!

We are to die; but even I perceive
'T is not a very hard thing so to die.
My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,
Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life
With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart goes forth
Each evening after that wild son of hers,
To track his thoughtless footstep through the streets:
How easy for them both to die like this!
I am not sure that I could live as they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds! They pass the gate? Yes!
— No! —

One torch is in the courtyard. Here flock all.

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped. What cries!

Ch. If they would drag one to the market-place,
One might speak there!

Eu. List, list!

Ch. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost!

The Populace [speaking together]. 'T was Chiappino, friends!
Our savior! The best man at last as first!
He who first made us feel what chains we wore,
He also strikes the blow that shatters them,
He at last saves us — our best citizen!
— Oh, have you only courage to speak now?

My eldest son was christened a year since
 "Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in mind —
 Cino, for shortness merely, you observe!
 The city's in our hands. The guards are fled.
 Do you, the cause of all, come down — come up —
 Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,
 Whate'er rewards you! Choose your own reward!
 The peril over, its reward begins!
 Come and harangue us in the market-place!

Eu. Chiappino?

Ch. Yes — I understand your eyes!

You think I should have promptlier disowned
 This deed with its strange unforeseen success,
 In favor of Luitolfo. But the peril,
 So far from ended, hardly seems begun.
 To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
 We easily shall make him full amends:
 And meantime — if we save them as they pray,
 And justify the deed by its effects?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once.

Ch. I know my own intention, be assured!

All's well. Precede us, fellow-citizens!

ACT II.

The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.

1st Bystander (to LUIT.) You, a friend of Luitolfo's? Then your friend is vanished, — in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble savior, and new Provost that is like to be, this very morning, — Chiappino!

Luit. He the new Provost?

2d. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established custom: for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino — the late Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night?

3d. You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milk-sop. He,

with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow, — this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the southeast gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master, — if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner, — such as San Cassiano, where his estate was, — receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here — how, for instance, the Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded — or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost — and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favorable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so?

3d. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip, — how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house, then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger. — And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say, — thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent, — consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigor and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone — Ha, ha!

Luit. [*Aside.*] (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

3d. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantry! I know Chiappino better.

1st. (Our friend has the bile! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant; we were to defy the world: but, next gray morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody. You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate; trots briskly through the streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes*," and makes directly for the Provost's Palace — there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself) — "Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar — So! And now, my revolvers and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 'tis I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions, — and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place, — once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next." And thus he ran on, on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser, but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

Luit. Do you see? I recognize him there!

3d. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest

period in praise of a pure republic, — “And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?” — returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino’s theory, place but each in its proper light. “Oh, are you there?” quoth Chiappino: “Ay, in that, I agree,” returns Chiappino: and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st. Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way, — “whereas what right,” asked he, “has any man to wish to be superior to another?” — whereat, “Ah, sir,” answers the Legate, “this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers — this — that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself set about attacking yourself. For see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, which are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul’s nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same, for you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one’s fellows, — all that you so disclaim, — but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it, — only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don’t want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion — to have me hold solemnly up your gown’s tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still, — the feeling that, through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!” And so chatting, they glided off arm-in-arm

Luit. And the result is . . .

1st. Why that, a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love — at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth — becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luit. (*withdrawing a little*). I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of, what she called, some experiment yet in process — I hastened here without her leave or knowledge: what could I else? But if this they say be true — if it were for such a purpose she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government: but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them — do you see? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto muchabused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavoring to realize those visions of a perfect State we once heard of?

Ch. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a laborer to help me, — stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me (turn and see it) the old Provost's house to experiment upon — ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a

crowd of workmen offer their services; here exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough: and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So, the love breaks away too!

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens — needs more than one object to content it, — and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part, — nor in finding that so many and so various loves are all united in the love of a woman, — manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and, one more word — which shall complete my instruction — does friendship go too? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

Ch. How the author? —

Eu. That blow now called yours . . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation: yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not: he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine — a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away, — a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA stands apart.

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts! By your leave, sir! Perform? What does the lady say of performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogni. She 'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you 'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say — not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must, with its accidents and circum-

stances: the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be, — not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you!" — for a favor done him. So, when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him — gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you: and it is good. But had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before — on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa — instead of being the beggar he then was, — I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs and all the money and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered. — To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Ch. I must have a woman that can sympathize with and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogni. Oh, I remember! You, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (— avowedly lesser — contest with you on that score would never do) — such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather? — on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus God serves us.

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness —

Ogni. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court; send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems! So shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a paradise by her, — as these western lands by Spain: though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to

kiss : don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips ! You understand my humor by this time ? I help men to carry out their own principles : if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

Ch. But these are my private affairs. What I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently : for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern — and easily, too — the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence, — when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one —

Ogni. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say, — New truths, old truths ! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world ; we know all we shall ever know : and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets, and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms ; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others : and so he re-states it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths, — impossible ! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business : — you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess to be imperfect. But what then ? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones. And as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was, — do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says, — so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there ' to what will it not prove applicable ? — " Contradictions ? Of course there were," say you !

Ch. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply ?

Ogni. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer — you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocates of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances: to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you: but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, "Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle! I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving," — even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, "I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, blows from which he saves me — I thank the antagonist equally!" Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies — do they not?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters, like another man, — they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side! And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited, — I answer, "So I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its action." I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only; but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and

choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts ; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his archangels and consorts with them : though he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak : I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Ch. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favor, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from ? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it ? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which — exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you !

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you ! That is the generous way. Cry — “Emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go !” The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, “Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way !” — you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with, — you go away, to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as, “Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require !” Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether ; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly : for, do you know what is to — all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius ? It is this : that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place, — still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably — would one think it ? — that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in favor of all such, I hope and believe.

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse ; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

Ogni. Not I (always on your own ground and showing, be it

noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining-rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect — men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power. Wanting beauty, we cultivate good-humor; missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural lord of the best of us — a Duke, he is now — there indeed is a virtue to be revered!

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogni. What else should Stiatta pay court to? He has talent, not honor and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No; or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty already.

Ogni. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! Are you nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatta we were talking of! who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen, heard too plainly "hiss, hiss, hiss," increase every moment. Till at last the man fell senseless: not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve.

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask? — to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogni. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part: you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And

I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself: the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Ch. And that stipulation?

Ogni. Just the obvious one — that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Ch. Ha!

Ogni. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course; what did you expect?

Ch. Who heard of this?

Ogni. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumor never reached you . . .

Ogni. Many more such rumors reach me, friend, than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps — which we may not have to ascend, after all! My good friends! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose) — who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost? His successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt, bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

Luitolfo [*coming forward*]. I!

All. Luitolfo!

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger: I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino — we are friends still: I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino; to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text, "Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo! Still, silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign however. And you will go aside for

a time? That is better still. I understand : it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so : they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid ; when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it — would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he had grown six feet high, black and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion ; and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life, — hoping nobody may murder him, — he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him, — why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now — (ay, good-bye to you ! He turns round the northwest gate : going to Lugo again ? Good-bye !) — And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home ! I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts.

LURIA

A TRAGEDY

I DEDICATE
THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY
TO A GREAT DRAMATIC POET,
“WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT:”
IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED, BY NOT THE LEAST
WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,
TO SHAKESPEARE,
MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN
A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,
To WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

LONDON, 1846

PERSONS.

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.
HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.
PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA's Chief Officer.
BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.
JACOPO (LAPO), his Secretary.
TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.
DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.

TIME, 14—.

SCENE. LURIA's *Camp between Florence and Pisa.*

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary* ; PUCCIO *standing by.*

Brac. [*to Puc.*] Then, you join battle in an hour?

Puc. Not I;

Luria, the captain.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] “In an hour, the battle.”

[*To Puc.*] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose digest,
And see if very much of your report

Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.
Does this instruct the Signory aright
How army stands with army?

Puc. [*taking the paper.*] All seems here :
— That Luria, seizing with our city's force
The several points of vantage, hill and plain,
Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,
And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Brac.

So sure ?

Tiburzio's a consummate captain too !

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] "The Signory hold Pisa in their hand."
Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir :
So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
To post with it to Florence !

Puc. [*returning the paper.*] All seems here ;
Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 't is my last report !
Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
And Luria's hastening at the city's call
To save her, as he only could, no doubt :
Till now that she is saved or sure to be, —
Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you :
Each day's note you, her Commissary, make
Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
No youngster am I longer, to my cost ;
Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice
And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,
As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
Had never met in any man before,
I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
But now, this last report and I have done —
So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
'T were not amiss if some one old i' the trade
Subscribed with, "True, for once rash counsel's best.
This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,
This boy to whose untried sagacity,
Raw valor, Florence trusts without reserve
The charge to save her, — justifies her choice ;
In no point has this stranger failed his friends :
Now praise ! " I say this, and it is not here.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] Write, "Puccio, superseded in the charge,
By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
And no reward our Signory can give

Their champion but he 'll back it cheerfully."
Aught more? Five minutes hence, both messengers!

[PUCCIO goes.]

Brac. [after a pause, and while he slowly tears the paper into shreds.]

I think . . . (pray God, I hold in fit contempt
This warfare's noble art and ordering,
And, — once the brace of prizers fairly matched,
Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good, —
Spit properly at what men term their skill! —)
Yet here I think our fighter has the odds
With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,
Such points of vantage in our hands and such,
Lucca still off the stage, too, — all 's assured:
Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
That Luria's trial end and sentence pass!

Sec. Patron, —

Brac. Ay, Lapo?

Sec. If you trip, I fall;

'Tis in self-interest I speak —

Brac. Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo! Nay!

When did I say pure love 's impossible?

I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,
Load your young brow with what concerns it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace

The Piazza by my side as if we talked,

Where all your old acquaintances may see:

You 'd die for me, I should not be surprised.

Now then!

Sec. Sir, look about and love yourself!

Step after step, the Signory and you

Tread gay till this tremendous point 's to pass;

Which, pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself, —

Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,

Or too delicious may not prove the pride

Of this long secret trial you dared plan,

Dare execute, you solitary here,

With the gray-headed toothless fools at home,

Who think themselves your lords, such slaves are they?

If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,

Declare the treason, claim its penalty, —

And sudden out of all the blaze of life,

On the best minute of his brightest day,

From that adoring army at his back,

Through Florence' joyous crowds before his face,

Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Brac.

Then —

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger past?

Sec. Sir, no, no, no, — the danger, and your spirit
At watch and ward? Where's danger on your part,
With that thin fitting instantaneous steel
'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world?
If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after all?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that?

Sec.

Here I sit, your scribe,

And in and out goes Luria, days and nights;
This Puccio comes; the Moor his other friend,
Husain; they talk — all that's feigned easily;
He speaks (I would not listen if I could),
Reads, orders, counsels: — but he rests sometimes, —
I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
On the lynx-skins, yonder; hold his bared black arms
Into the sun from the tent-opening; laugh
When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.
That man believes in Florence, as the saint
Tied to the wheel believes in God.

Brac.

How strange!

You too have thought that!

Sec.

Do but you think too,

And all is saved! I only have to write,
“The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last;
Bury it” . . . so I write the Signory . . .
“Bury this trial in your breast forever,
Blot it from things or done or dreamed about!
So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
With no suspicion what reverse was near, —
As if no meteoric finger hushed
The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip,
Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight.”

Brac. [*looks to the wall of the tent.*] Did he draw that?

Sec.

With charcoal, when the watch

Made the report at midnight; Lady Domizia
Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember;
That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body, — a sketch, —
And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec.

She is sent the spy

Of Florence, — spies on you as you on him :
 Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
 Is surely safe. What shall I write ?

Brac.

I see —

A Moorish front, nor of such ill design !
 Lapo, there 's one thing plain and positive ;
 Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.
 What ? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,
 And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
 Yet render up the charge when peace return,
 Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
 Even for the best and bravest of ourselves —
 If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
 Should sink its point before the statish's pen,
 And the calm head replace the violent hand,
 Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
 Before ambition with unvarying fate,
 Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
 Be forced to own such falls the natural end,
 And, sparing further to expose her sons
 To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
 Declare, " The foreigner, one not my child,
 Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by height
 The glory, then descend into the shame ;
 So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
 And punishment the easier task for me : "
 — If on the best of us such brand she set,
 Can I suppose an utter alien here,
 This Luria, our inevitable foe,
 Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
 Born free from many ties that bind the rest
 Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,
 No past with us, no future, — such a spirit
 Shall hold the path from which our stanchest broke,
 Stand firm where every famed precursor fell ?
 My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
 So duly noted of the man's intent,
 Are for the doting fools at home, not me
 The charges here, they may be true or false :
 — What is set down ? Errors and oversights,
 A dallying interchange of courtesies
 With Pisa's General, — all that, hour by hour,
 Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
 Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
 Now overhazard, overcaution now ;
 Even that he loves this lady who believes

She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
 By my procurement here, to spy on me,
 Lest I one minute lose her from my sight —
 She who remembering her whole House's fall,
 That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
 Now labors to make Luria (poor device
 As plain) the instrument of her revenge!
 — That she is ever at his ear to prompt
 Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
 Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
 And after, when sure disappointment follows,
 Proportionable rage at such a wrong —
 Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,
 Weigh with me less than least; as nothing weigh.
 Upon that broad man's-heart of his, I go:
 On what I know must be, yet while I live
 Shall never be, because I live and know.
 Brute-force shall not rule Florence! Intellect
 May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies, —
 But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
 And intellect's tradition so kept up!
 Till the good come — 't was intellect that ruled,
 Not brute-force bringing from the battlefield
 The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
 We lent it there to lure its grossness on;
 All which it took for earnest and kept safe
 To show against us in our market-place,
 Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear
 (Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,
 When all was done they frightened nobody)
 Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
 With our own warrant and allowance. No!
 The whole procedure's overcharged. — its end
 In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
 To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?
 Well then, to perish for a single fault,
 Let that be simple justice! — There, my Lapo!
 A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body:
 Blot it out — and bid Luria's sentence come!

*LURIA, who, with DOMIZIA, has entered unobserved at the close
 of the last phrase, now advancing.*

Lur. And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now?

Brac. Ah, you so close, sir? Lady Domizia too?

I said it needs must be a busy moment
 For one like you; that you were now i' the thick
 Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sat . . .

Lur. No — in that paper, — it was in that paper
What you were saying!

Brac. Oh — my day's despatch!
I censure you to Florence: will you see?

Lur. See your despatch, your last, for the first time?
Well, if I should, now? For in truth, Domizia,
He would be forced to set about another,
In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
To mention that important circumstance.
So, while he wrote I should gain time, such time!
Do not send this!

Brac. And wherefore?

Lur. These Lucchese
Are not arrived — they never will arrive!
And I must fight to-day, arrived or not,
And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure:
And then will be arriving his Lucchese,
But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
To look upon my battle from the hills,
Like a late moon, of use to nobody!
And I must break my battle up, send forth,
Surround on this side, hold in check on that.
Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
You make me send for fresh instructions home,
— Incompleteness, incompleteness!

Brac. Ah, we scribes!
Why, I had registered that very point,
The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
As a most happy fortune; both at once
Were formidable: singly faced, each falls.

Lur. So, no great battle for my Florentines!
No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
For all of them, the simple as the wise,
Old, young, alike, that do not understand
Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
By which we prove retreat may be success,
Delay — best speed, — half loss, at times, — whole gain:
They want results — as if it were their fault!
And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
Will not be able now to simply say
“Your servant has performed his task — enough!
You ordered, he has executed: good!
Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,
Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo's shade!”
No, you will have to argue and explain,

Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese!

Dom. Well, you will triumph for the past enough,
Whatever be the present chance; no service
Falls to the ground with Florence: she awaits
Her savior, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah, Braccio, you know Florence! Will she, think you,
Receive one . . . what means "fittingly receive"?
— Receive compatriots, doubtless — I am none:
And yet Domizia promises so much!

Brac. Kind women still give men a woman's prize.
I know not o'er which gate most boughs will arch,
Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue.
I should have judged, the fullest of rewards
Our state gave Luria, when she made him chief
Of her whole force, in her best captain's place.

Lur. That, my reward? Florence on my account
Relieved Ser Puccio? — mark you, my reward!
And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy —
Goes here and there, gets close, may fight himself,
While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee.
That was my calling, there was my true place!
I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible head,
As I am over Puccio, — taking life
Directly from her eye! They give me you:
But do you cross me, set me half to work?
I enjoy nothing — though I will, for once!
Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?

Brac. Let us compound the matter: wait till noon:
Then, no arrival, —

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast!
I wonder, do you guess why I delay
Involuntarily the final blow
As long as possible? Peace follows it!
Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
Come out again, the penetrating eyes;
As if a spell broke, all resumed, each art
You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile.
'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
The interrupted scaffold climbs anew;
The walls are peopled by the painter's brush;
The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.
The present noise and trouble have retired
And left the eternal past to rule once more; —
You speak its speech and read its records plain,

Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your friend :
But Luria — where will then be Luria's place ?

Dom. Highest in honor, for that past's own sake,
Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that went before from wreck,
Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets,
Lead the smooth life my rough life helps no more,
So different, so new, so beautiful —
Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
And shepherd-pipes come into use again ?
For very lone and silent seems my East
In its drear vastness : still it spreads, and still
No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere —
Not ever more ! — Well, well, to-day is ours !

Dom. [to BRAC.] Should he not have been one of us ?

Lur. Oh, no !

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
Of coming into you, of changing thus, —
Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
The boundless unrest of the savage heart !
The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength ;
Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile :
Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies.
Well, 't is not sure the quiet lasts forever !
Your placid heads still find rough hands new work ;
Some minutes' chance — there comes the need of mine :
And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio !
You hold my strength ; 't were best dispose of it :
What you created, see that you find food for —
I shall be dangerous else !

Brac. How dangerous, sir ?

Lur. There are so many ways, Domizia warns me,
And one with half the power that I possess,
Grows very formidable ! Do you doubt ?
Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom. While we talk,
Morn wears ; we keep you from your proper place,
The field.

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more ;
My part is done, and Puccio's may begin :

I cannot trench upon his province longer
 With any face. — You think yourselves so safe?
 Why see — in concert with Tiburzio, now —
 One could . . .

Dom. A trumpet!

Lur. My Lucchese at last!
 Arrived, as sure as Florence stands! Your leave!

[*Springs out.*]

Dom. How plainly is true greatness charactered
 By such unconscious sport as Luria's here,
 Strength sharing least the secret of itself!
 Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
 Such save the world which none but they could save,
 Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Brac. Yes: and how worthy note, that these same great ones
 In hand or head, with such unconsciousness
 And all its due entailed humility,
 Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,
 From taking up whatever tool there be
 Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
 Into their mild hands as a thing of course!
 The statist finds it natural to lead
 The mob who might as easily lead him —
 The captain marshals troops born skilled in war —
 Statist and captain verily believe!

While we poor scribes . . . you catch me thinking now,
 That I shall in this very letter write
 What none of you are able! To it, Lapo! [*DOMIZIA goes.*]
 This last, worst, all-affected childish fit
 Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
 Convinces me; the past was no child's play:
 It was a man beat Pisa, — not a child.
 All's mere dissimulation — to remove
 The fear, he best knows we should entertain.
 The utmost danger was at hand. Is 't written?
 Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
 And speak your fullest on the other side.

Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing
 My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
 And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
 As the Mage Negro king to Christ the babe —
 I judge his childishness the mere relapse
 To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
 And presently will work, so, meantime, plays:
 Whence, more than ever I believe in him.

Brac. [*after a pause.*] The sword! At best, the soldier, as
 he says,

In Florence — the black face, the barbarous name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men ! — To Florence with each letter !

ACT II.

NOON.

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy heart
Through all its safeguards ? Hate is said to help —
Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm ;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
And will thee dead : yet do I trust it not.
Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
But thy own nature, — hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn aside
A single step, for gratitude or shame, —
Grace but this Luria, — this wild mass of rage
I have prepared to launch against thee now. —
With other payment than thy noblest found, —
Give his desert for once its due reward, —
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth :
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then — I reach thee. Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected wreath ;
And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
To exile, never to return, — they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed, — how else
Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
Judge Porzio's actions worthy such reward ?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
— Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,
Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
To show its color whether false or no !

My brothers never had a friend like me
 Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
 — Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
 Cry, " Florence was all falseness, so, false here ! "
 And show them what a simple task remained —
 To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
 The city wedded to the wickedness.
 None stood by them as I by Luria stand.
 So, when the stranger cheated of his due
 Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
 Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
 For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
 Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died !
 He comes — his friend — black faces in the camp
 Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old.

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Well, and the movement — is it as you hope ?
 'T is Lucca ?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely !
 Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Dom. Whom I withdraw before ; though if I lingered
 You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast.
 The overtaking night brings such reward !
 And where will then be room for me ? Yet, praised,
 Remember who was first to promise praise,
 And envy those who also can perform !

[*Goes.*]

Lur. This trumpet from the Pisans ? —

Hus.

In the camp ;

A very noble presence — Braccio's visage
 On Puccio's body — calm and fixed and good ;
 A man I seem as I had seen before :
 Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Lur. Admit him ! This will prove the last delay.

Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on !
 Thou heard'st what the grave woman said but now :
 To-night rewards thee. That is well to hear ;
 But stop not therefore : hear it, and go on !

Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest
 They round me in the ears with, all day long ?
 All that, I never take for earnest, friend !
 Well would it suit us, — their triumphal arch
 Or storied pillar, — thee and me, the Moors !
 But gratitude in those Italian eyes —
 That, we shall get ?

Hus.

It is too cold an air.
 Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist :
 Where is he now ? So, I trust none of them.

Lur. Truly?

Hus. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men.
They use thee.

Lur. And I feel it, Husain! yes,
And care not — yes, an alien force like mine
Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature; where its sole use seems
To fight with and keep off an adverse force,
As alien, — which repelled, mine too withdraws:
Inside, they know not what to do with me.
Thus I have told them laughingly and oft,
But long since am prepared to learn the worst.

Hus. What is the worst?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husain,
Will speak the destiny they dare not speak —
Banish myself before they find the heart.
I will be first to say, "The work rewards!
I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
So may it prove! — meanwhile 't is best I go,
Go carry safe my memories of you all
To other scenes of action, newer lands." —
Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
They would not easily have tired of me.
You think this hard to say?

Hus. Say or not say,
So thou but go, so they but let thee go!
This hating people, that hate each the other,
And in one blandness to us Moors unite —
Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm;
While any creature of a better blood,
They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
And never touch it, — pines without a wound,
Withers away beside their eyes and breath.
See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe,
As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
Who hates him most! But thou, the friend of all,
. . . Come out of them!

Lur. The Pisan trumpet now!

Hus. Breathe free — it is an enemy, no friend! [Goes.

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
Their perfect use in him; just so the brutes

Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
 When change is in the elements at work,
 Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
 But here. — he takes the distant chariot-wheel
 For thunder, festal flame for lightning's flash,
 The finer traits of cultivated life
 For treachery and malevolence: I see!

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message! I but wait your message
 To sound the charge. You bring no overture
 For truce? — I would not, for your General's sake,
 You spoke of truce: a time to fight is come,
 And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps
 His honest soldier's-name to beat me with,
 Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust!

Tib. I am Tiburzio.

Lur. You? 'Tis — yes . . . Tiburzio!
 You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley
 From Puccio, when I threw in succors there!
 Why, I was on the heights — through the defile
 Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost!
 You wore an open skull-cap with a twist
 Of water-reeds — the plume being hewn away;
 While I drove down my battle from the heights,
 I saw with my own eyes!

Tib. And you are Luria
 Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
 In error of the battle-signal's sense,
 Back safely to me at the critical time —
 One of a hundred deeds. I know you! Therefore
 To none but you could I . . .

Lur. No truce, Tiburzio!

Tib. Luria, you know the peril imminent
 On Pisa, — that you have us in the toils,
 Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
 The rage of her implacablest of foes
 From Pisa, — if we fall to-day, she falls.
 Though Lucca will arrive, yet, 't is too late.
 You have so plainly here the best of it,
 That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
 How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
 How truly formidable by despair.
 Still, probabilities should have their weight:
 The extreme chance is ours, but, that chance failing,
 You win this battle. Wherefore say I this?
 To be well apprehended when I add,

This danger absolutely comes from you.

Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .

Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tib. Even so.

Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
With all your present nobleness of soul,
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.

Lur. Me, detach?

Tib. Time urges. You will ruin presently
Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
You think you know. I have from time to time
Made prize of certain secret missives sent
From Braccio here, the Commissary, home :
And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.
Your trial occupies the Signory ;
They sit in judgment on your conduct now.
When men at home inquire into the acts
Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
Brief, they are Florentines ! You, saving them,
Seek but the sure destruction saviors find.

Lur. Tiburzio !

Tib. All the wonder is of course.

I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise — scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road ; but this, —
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Lur. Florence !

Tib. Now, were yourself a Florentine,

This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
Would be no reason you should fall away.
The mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service,
Her own affair ; reward — there's no reward !
But you are bound by quite another tie.
Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa ; 't is as fair a city

You war against, as that you fight for — famed
 As well as she in story, graced no less
 With noble heads and patriotic hearts :
 Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
 Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
 Which take importance from familiar view,
 Stand as the right and sole to be upheld.
 Therefore, should the preponderating gift
 Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
 Which made you hers, not Pisa's, void the scale, —
 Old ties dissolving, things resume their place,
 And all begins again. Break seal and read !
 At least let Pisa offer for you now !
 And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice —
 Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
 This last fight and its opportunity ;
 The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
 Or in the turn of battle dying so
 That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
 As I for Florence . . . say my chance were yours !
 You read this letter, and you find . . . no, no !
 Too mad !

Tib. I read the letter, find they purpose
 When I have crushed their foe, to crush me : well ?

Lur. You, being their captain, what is it you do ?

Tib. Why as it is, all cities are alike ;
 As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.
 I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
 As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,
 Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart
 Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
 Both which defects ask proper punishment.
 Another tenure of obedience, mine !
 You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Lur. And act on what I read ? What act were fit ?
 If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
 In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,
 — If that break up and, disimprisoning
 From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be !
 You may be very sage, yet — all the world
 Having to fail, or your sagacity,
 You do not wish to find yourself alone !
 What would the world be worth ? Whose love be sure ?
 The world remains : you are deceived !

Tib.

Your hand !

I lead the vanguard. — If you fall, beside,
 The better : I am left to speak ! For me,
 This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
 If I could help, it misses its effect ;
 And after all you will look gallantly
 Found dead here with that letter in your breast.

Lur. Tiburzio — I would see these people once
 And test them ere I answer finally !
 At your arrival let the trumpet sound :
 If mine return not then the wonted cry
 It means that I believe — am Pisa's !

Tib.

Well !

[*Goes.*

Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true ! My blood
 Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
 If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
 And the wild desert full of foes around,
 I should have broke the bread and given the salt
 Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,
 Taken my turn to sleeping between his knees,
 Safe in the untroubled brow and honest cheek.
 Oh world, where all things pass and nought abides,
 Oh life, the long mutation — is it so ?
 Is it with life as with the body's change ?
 — Where, e'en though better follow, good must pass,
 Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's grace,
 Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
 But silently the first gift dies away,
 And though the new stays, never both at once.
 Life's time of savage instinct o'er with me,
 It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
 As if to punish the ingratitude
 With which I turned to grow in these new lights,
 And learned to look with European eyes.
 Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
 Where Braccio's brow tells nothing, Puccio's mouth,
 Domizia's eyes reject the searcher : yes !
 For on their calm sagacity I lean,
 Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,
 Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
 Yes, that is better — that is best of all !
 Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go.
 Yes — when the desert creature's heart, at fault
 Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
 Betrays its step into the pathless drift —
 The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
 By the sole bearing of the visible star,

Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subside,
 The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again, —
 The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
 Yes : I trust Florence : Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon's at an end : no Lucca ? You must fight.

Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
 I am no Florentine ?

Dom. It is yourself
 Who still are forcing us, importunately,
 To bear in mind what else we should forget.

Lur. For loss ! — for what I lose in being none !
 No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
 But would remind you of the stranger's loss
 In natural friends and advocates at home,
 Hereditary loves, even rivalships
 With precedent for honor and reward.
 Still, there's a gain, too ! If you take it so,
 The stranger's lot has special gain as well.
 Do you forget there was my own far East
 I might have given away myself to, once,
 As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
 Stood there like a descended deity ?
 There, worship waits us : what is it waits here ?

[Shows the letter.]

See ! Chance has put into my hand the means
 Of knowing what I earn, before I work.
 Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
 With payment palpably before me ? See !
 Here lies my whole reward ! Best learn it now
 Or keep it for the end's entire delight ?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
 For swordsman's-pay alone, — break seal and read !
 In that case, you will find your full desert.

Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends !
 You need me now, and all the graciousness
 This letter can contain will hardly balance
 The after feeling that you need no more.
 This moment . . . oh, the East has use with you !
 Its sword still flashes — is not flung aside
 With the past praise, in a dark corner yet !
 How say you ? 'Tis not so with Florentines —
 Captains of yours — for them, the ended war
 Is but a first step to the peace begun :
 He who did well in war, just earns the right
 To begin doing well in peace, you know :

And certain my precursors, — would not such
 Look to themselves in such a chance as mine,
 Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps?
 For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
 Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,
 Treachery even. Say that one of you
 Surmised this letter carried what might turn
 To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice:
 What would he do?

Dom. [*hastily.*] Thank God and take revenge!
 Hurl her own force against the city straight!
 And, even at the moment when the foe
 Sounded defiance . . .

[*TIBURZIO's trumpet sounds in the distance.*

Lur. Ah, you Florentines!
 So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt!
 My simple Moorish instinct bids me clench
 The obligation you relieve me from,
 Still deeper! [*To Puc.*] Sound our answer, I should say,
 And thus: — [*tearing the paper.*] — The battle! That
 solves every doubt.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

PUCCIO, as making a report to JACOPO.

Puc. And here, your captain must report the rest;
 For, as I say, the main engagement over
 And Luria's special part in it performed,
 How could subaltern like myself expect
 Leisure or leave to occupy the field
 And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting?
 I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
 Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
 That Luria would detach me and prevent
 The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
 Friends in the rear, a point to rally by.
 But no, more honorable proved my post!
 I had the august captive to escort
 Safe to our camp; some other could pursue,
 Fight, and be famous; gentler chance was mine —
 Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed!
 He's in the tent there.

Jac.

Is the substance down?

I write — “The vanguard beaten and both wings
In full retreat, Tiburzio prisoner” —
And now, — “That they fell back and formed again
On Lucca’s coming.” Why then, after all,
’Tis half a victory, no conclusive one?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jac. And Luria’s fault was — ?

Puc. Oh, for fault — not much !
He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
— There’s commonly more prudence ; now, he seemed
To hurry measures, otherwise well judged.
By over-concentrating strength at first
Against the enemy’s van, both wings escaped :
That’s reparable, yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
With the advantage of a fault beside —
What is it, Puccio? — that by pressing forward
With too impetuous . . .

Brac. The report anon !
Thanks, sir — you have elsewhere a charge, I know.

[PUCCIO goes.]

There’s nothing done but I would do again ;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the past proves nothing,
And Luria has kept faithful to the close.

Jac. I was for waiting.

Brac. Yes : so was not I.
He could not choose but tear that letter — true !
Still, certain of his tones, I mind. and looks : —
You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say !
Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Lur. [to PUC.] Say, at his pleasure I will see Tiburzio !
All’s at his pleasure.

Dom. [to LUR.] Were I not forewarned
You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise, — I might tell you how you have deserved
Of Florence by this last and crowning feat :
But words offend.

Lur. Nay, you may praise me now.
I want instruction every hour, I find,
On points where once I saw least need of it ;
And praise, I have been used to slight perhaps,
Seems scarce so easily dispensed with now.
After a battle, half one’s strength is gone ;

The glorious passion in us once appeased,
 Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.
 All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
 Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
 To me, the stranger: you, no doubt, may know
 Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's yoke.
 And peradventure I grow nearer you,
 For I, too, want to know and be assured.
 When a cause ceases to reward itself,
 Its friend seeks fresh sustainments; praise is one,
 And here stand you — you, lady, praise me well.
 But yours — (your pardon) — is unlearned praise.
 To the motive, the endeavor, the heart's self,
 Your quick sense looks: you crown and call aright
 The soul o' the purpose, ere 't is shaped as act,
 Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.
 But when the act comes, stands for what 't is worth.
 — Here 's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he 's my judge!
 Was all well, Puccio?

Puc. All was . . . must be well:

If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .
 — No, there 's no doubt, we must — all was well done.

Lur. In truth? Still, you are of the trade, my Puccio!

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.
 There 's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,
 For the all-unestimated sum of pains
 That go to a success the world can see:
 They praise then, but the best they never know
 — While you know! So, if envy mix with it,
 Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,
 Whatever be the dregs, that drop 's pure gold!
 — For nothing 's like it; nothing else records
 Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
 Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away
 Forever — so, pure gold that praise must be!
 And I have yours, my soldier! yet the best
 Is still to come. There 's one looks on apart
 Whom all refers to, failure or success;
 What 's done might be our best, our utmost work,
 And yet inadequate to serve his need.
 Here 's Braccio now, for Florence — here 's our service —
 Well done for us, seems it well done for him?
 His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
 Answers the end? Should he have chosen higher?
 Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought?
Brac. This battle, with the foregone services,
 Saves Florence.

Lur. Why then, all is very well !
 Here am I in the middle of my friends,
 Who know me and who love me, one and all !
 And yet . . . 't is like . . . this instant while I speak
 Is like the turning-moment of a dream
 When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me !
 Well then, one always dreams of friends at home ;
 And always comes, I say, the turning-point
 When something changes in the friendly eyes
 That love and look on you . . . so slight, so slight . . .
 And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
 Or changed and enemies, for all their words,
 And all is mockery and a maddening show.
 You now, so kind here, all you Florentines,
 What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . .
 Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well ! —
 Come now — this battle saves you, all 's at end,
 Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill, —
 Come now, what 's done against me, while I speak,
 In Florence ? Come ! I feel it in my blood,
 My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
 That spite of all this smiling and soft speech
 You are betraying me ! What is it you do ?
 Have it your way, and think my use is over —
 Think you are saved and may throw off the mask —
 Have it my way, and think more work remains
 Which I could do, — so, show you fear me not !
 Or prudent be, or daring, as you choose,
 But tell me — tell what I refused to know
 At noon, lest heart should fail me ! Well ? That letter ?
 My fate is sealed at Florence ! What is it ?

Brac. Sir, I shall not deny what you divine.
 It is no novelty for innocence
 To be suspected, but a privilege :
 The after certain compensation comes.
 Charges, I say not whether false or true,
 Have been preferred against you some time since,
 Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
 And which are therefore undergoing now
 The due investigation. That is all.
 I doubt not but your innocence will prove
 Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
 To them this evening, when the trial ends.

Lur. My trial ?

Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
 My whole heart thanks thee !

Puc. [*to BRAC.*] What is "trial," sir?
 It was not for a trial — surely, no —
 I furnished you those notes from time to time.
 I held myself aggrieved — I am a man —
 And I might speak, — ay, and speak mere truth, too,
 And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
 What should assist a — trial, do you say?
 You should have told me!

Dom. Nay, go on, go on!
 His sentence! Do they sentence him? What is it?
 The block — wheel?

Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,
 Nor shall I give my own opinion now
 Of what it should be, or is like to be.
 When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
 Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me?

Brac. I assert,
 Maintain and justify the absolute right
 Of Florence to do all she can have done
 In this procedure, — standing on her guard,
 Receiving even services like yours
 With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
 In other matters, keep the mummerly up!
 Take all the experiences of all the world,
 Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,
 Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt out a brain,
 — In other cases, know these, warrant these,
 And then dispense with these — 't is very well!
 Let friend trust friend, and love demand love's like,
 And gratitude be claimed for benefits, —
 There's grace in that, — and when the fresh heart breaks,
 The new brain proves a ruin, what of them?
 Where is the matter of one moth the more
 Singed in the candle, at a summer's end?
 But Florence is no simple John or James
 To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit
 That he's the one excepted man by fate,
 And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,
 Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
 To Paul and George intent to try their chance.
 Florence exists because these pass away.
 She's a contrivance to supply a type
 Of man, which men's deficiencies refuse;
 She binds so many, that she grows out of them —
 Stands steady o'er their numbers, though they change

And pass away — there's always what upholds,
 Always enough to fashion the great show.
 As see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
 Of shapely cloud substantially the same!
 A thousand vapors rise and sink again,
 Are interfused, and live their life and die, —
 Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air,
 Under the sun's straight influence: that is well,
 That is worth heaven should hold, and God should bless!
 And so is Florence, — the unseen sun above,
 Which draws and holds suspended all of us,
 Binds transient vapors into a single cloud
 Differing from each and better than they all.
 And shall she dare to stake this permanence
 On any one man's faith? Man's heart is weak,
 And its temptations many: let her prove
 Each servant to the very uttermost
 Before she grant him her reward, I say!

Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,
 Wronged hearts, not destined to receive reward,
 Though they deserve it, did she only know!
 — What should she do for these?

Brac.

What does she not?

Say, that she gives them but herself to serve!
 Here's Luria — what had profited his strength,
 When half an hour of sober fancying
 Had shown him step by step the uselessness
 Of strength exerted for strength's proper sake?
 But the truth is, she did create that strength,
 Draw to the end the corresponding means.
 The world is wide — are we the only men?
 Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
 Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
 Call any man the sole great wise and good!
 But shall we therefore, standing by ourselves,
 Insult our souls and God with the same speech?
 There, swarm the ignoble thousands under him:
 What marks us from the hundreds and the tens?
 Florence took up, turned all one way the soul
 Of Luria with its fires, and here he glows!
 She takes me out of all the world as him,
 Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
 The fire! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best?

Lur. Ah, brave me? And is this indeed the way
 To gain your good word and sincere esteem?
 Am I the baited animal that must turn

And fight his baiters to deserve their praise?
 Obedience is mistake then? Be it so!
 Do you indeed remember I stand here
 The captain of the conquering army, — mine —
 With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
 To show for what their names meant when you gave,
 Not what you style them now you take away?
 If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
 And dash the first enthusiastic thrill
 Of victory with this you menace now —
 Commend to the instinctive popular sense,
 My story first, your comment afterward, —
 Will they take, think you, part with you or me?
 If I say — I, the laborer they saw work,
 Ending my work, ask pay, and find my lords
 Have all this while provided silently
 Against the day of pay and proving faith,
 By what you call my sentence that's to come —
 Will friends advise I wait complacently?
 If I meet Florence half-way at their head,
 What will you do, my mild antagonist?

Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
 That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
 And so was saved. "See, Italy," I'll say,
 "The crown of our precautions! Here's a man
 Was far advanced, just touched on the belief
 Less subtle cities had accorded long;
 But we were wiser: at the end comes this!"
 And from that minute, where is Luria? Lost!
 The very stones of Florence cry against
 The all-exacting, nought-enduring fool,
 Who thus resents her first probation, flouts
 As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
 He, only, walked the earth with privilege
 Against suspicion, free where angels fear:
 He, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
 Must turn, and stand on his defence, forsooth!
 Reward? You will not be worth punishment!

Lur. And Florence knew me thus! Thus I have lived, —
 And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
 Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,
 Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
 Reported me — how could you otherwise!
 Ay? — and what dropped from you, just now, moreover?
 Your information, Puccio? — Did your skill,
 Your understanding sympathy approve

Such a report of me? Was this the end?
 Or is even this the end? Can I stop here?
 You, lady, with the woman's stand apart,
 The heart to see with, past man's brain and eyes,
 . . . I cannot fathom why you should destroy
 The unoffending one, you call your friend —
 Still, lessoned by the good examples here
 Of friendship, 't is but natural I ask —
 Had you a further aim, in aught you urged,
 Than your friend's profit — in all those instances
 Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong —
 All I remember now for the first time?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
 Sister of Porzio and of Berto both,
 So, have foreseen all that has come to pass.
 I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
 Must needs mistrust a stranger's — dealing them
 Punishment, would deny him his reward.
 And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
 He would not bear, but live and fight against —
 Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them! All these against one foreigner!
 And all this while, where is in the whole world
 To his good faith a single witness?

Tiburzio [*who has entered unseen during the preceding
 dialogue*]. Here!

Thus I bear witness, not in word but deed.
 I live for Pisa; she's not lost to-day
 By many chances — much prevents from that!
 Her army has been beaten, I am here,
 But Lucca comes at last, one happy chance!
 I rather would see Pisa three times lost
 Than saved by any traitor, even by you;
 The example of a traitor's happy fortune
 Would bring more evil in the end than good; —
 Pisa rejects the traitor, craves yourself!
 I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
 My charge, — the highest office, sword and shield!
 You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
 Your army, give her calumny that ground —
 Nor bring one soldier: be you all we gain!
 And all she'll lose, — a head to deck some bridge,
 And save the cost o' the crown should deck the head.
 Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
 Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
 A proverb and a by-word in all mouths!

Go you to Pisa! Florence is my place —
 Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
 I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
 To Pisa!

Dom. Ah my Braccio, are you caught?

Brac. Puccio, good soldier and good citizen,
 Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
 Ready as fit to serve in this event
 Florence, who clear foretold it from the first —
 Through me, she gives you the command and charge
 She takes, through me, from him who held it late!
 A painful trial, very sore, was yours:
 All that could draw out, marshal in array
 The selfish passions 'gainst the public good —
 Sights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear:
 And ever you did bear and bow the head!
 It had been sorry trial, to precede
 Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
 For luring gleam; your footsteps kept the track
 Through dark and doubt: take all the light at once!
 Trial is over, consummation shines;
 Well have you served, as well henceforth command!

Puc. No, no . . . I dare not! I am grateful, glad;
 But Luria — you shall understand he's wronged —
 And he's my captain — this is not the way
 We soldiers climb to fortune: think again!
 The sentence is not even passed, beside!
 I dare not . . . where's the soldier could?

Lur. Now, Florence —

Is it to be? — You will know all the strength
 O' the savage — to your neck the proof must go?
 You will prove the brute nature? Ah, I see!
 The savage plainly is impassible —
 He keeps his calm way through insulting words,
 Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures — one of which
 Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense,
 But if he stolidly advance, march mute
 Without a mark upon his callous hide,
 Through the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
 And leave the tatters of your flesh upon.
 — You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
 The murk mid-forest, the grand obstacle,
 Which when you reach, you give the labor up,
 Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
 — He goes against it, like the brute he is:
 It falls before him, or he dies in his course.

I kept my course through past ingratitude :
 I saw — it does seem, now, as if I saw,
 Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
 — Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,
 Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
 You grew so bold on, while you so despised
 The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
 Was saving you : I bore and kept my course.
 Now real wrong fronts me : see if I succumb !
 Florence withstands me ? — I will punish her.

At night my sentence will arrive, you say.
 Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel
 — Unauthorized to lay my office down,
 Retaining my full power to will and do :
 After — it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks !
 Go ; you are free : join Lucca ! I suspend
 All further operations till to-night.
 Thank you, and for the silence most of all !
 [*To BRAC.*] Let my complacent bland accuser go
 Carry his self-approving head and heart
 Safe through the army which would trample him
 Dead in a moment at my word or sign !
 Go, sir, to Florence ; tell friends what I say —
 That while I wait my sentence, theirs waits them !
 [*To DOM.*] You, lady, — you have black Italian eyes !
 I would be generous if I might . . . oh, yes —
 For I remember how so oft you seemed
 Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
 Which Florence finds God built between us both.
 Alas, for generosity ! this hour
 Asks retribution : bear it as you may,
 I must — the Moor — the savage, — pardon you !
 Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth !

ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria will do ? Ah, 't is yours, fair sir.
 You and your subtle-witted master's part,
 To tell me that ; I tell you what he can.

Jac. Friend, you mistake my station : I observe
 The game, watch how my betters play, no more.

Puc. But mankind are not pieces — there's your fault !
 You cannot push them, and, the first move made,
 Lean back and study what the next shall be,
 In confidence that, when 't is fixed upon,
 You find just where you left them, blacks and whites :
 Men go on moving when your hand's away.
 You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
 This whole time, — firmlier than I choose to build,
 Who never doubted it — of old, that is —
 With Luria in his ordinary mind.
 But now, oppression makes the wise man mad :
 How do I know he will not turn and stand
 And hold his own against you, as he may ?
 Suppose he but withdraw to Pisa — well, —
 Then, even if all happen to your wish,
 Which is a chance . . .

Jac. Nay — 't was an oversight,
 Not waiting till the proper warrant came :
 You could not take what was not ours to give.
 But when at night the sentence really comes,
 Our city authorizes past dispute
 Luria's removal and transfers the charge,
 You will perceive your duty and accept ?

Puc. Accept what ? muster-rolls of soldiers' names ?
 An army upon paper ? — I want men,
 The hearts as well as hands — and where's a heart
 But beats with Luria, in the multitude
 I come from walking through by Luria's side ?
 You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,
 Head-like, upon their trunk ; one heart feeds both,
 They feel him there, live twice, and well know why.
 — For they do know, if you are ignorant,
 Who kept his own place and respected their's,
 Managed their sweat, yet never spared his blood.
 All was your act : another might have served —
 There's peradventure no such dearth of heads —
 But you chose Luria — so, they grew one flesh,
 And now, for nothing they can understand,
 Luria removed, off is to roll the head ;
 The body's mine — much I shall do with it !

Jac. That's at the worst.

Puc. No — at the best, it is !
 Best, do you hear ? I saw them by his side.
 Only we two with Luria in the camp
 Are left that keep the secret. You think that ?
 Hear what I know : from rear to van, no heart

But felt the quiet patient hero there
 Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye
 But glancing told its fellow the whole story
 Of that convicted silent knot of spies
 Who passed through them to Florence ; they might pass —
 No breast but gladlier beat when free of such !
 Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
 Bear him to Florence as their natural lord,
 Partake his fortune, live or die with him.

Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him
 Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self despite
 To still continue second in command !

Puc. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate !
 Your tricks succeed with me too well for that !
 I am as you have made me, live and die
 To serve your end ! a mere trained fighting-hack
 With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,
 For my life's rule and ordinance of God !
 I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
 And earn my praise, and guard against my blame,
 As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,
 And fight against one better than myself,
 Spite of my heart's conviction of his worth.
 That, you may count on ! — just as hitherto
 I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,
 Slighted, insulted, terms we learn by rote, —
 All because Luria superseded me —
 Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
 Mounted above me to its proper place !
 What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
 The cordial brother's-bearing ? This was clear —
 I, once the captain, was subaltern now,
 And so must keep complaining like a fool !
 Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say !
 You neither play your puppets to the end,
 Nor treat the real man, — for his realness' sake
 Thrust rudely in their place, — with such regard
 As might console them for their altered rank.
 Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
 For Luria, and here's all your pet deserves !
 Of what account, then, is your laughing-stock ?
 One word for all : whatever Luria does,
 — If backed by his indignant troops he turn,
 Revenge himself, and Florence go to ground, —
 Or, for a signal everlasting shame,
 He pardon you, simply seek better friends,
 Side with the Pisans and Lucchese for change

— And if I, pledged to ingrates past belief,
Dare fight against a man such fools call false,
Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights me, —
Whichever way he win, he wins for worth,
For every soldier, for all true and good !
Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this !

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou ? — For they are gone ! The world
lies bare
Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
Like what it is, now Florence goes away !
Thou livest now, with men art man again !
Those Florentines were all to thee of old ;
But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each,
There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes !
Saw'st thou ?

Lur. I saw.

Hus. Then, hold thy course, my king !
The years return. Let thy heart have its way :
Ah, they would play with thee as with all else,
Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest ?
Oh watch, oh listen only to these fiends
Once at their occupation ! Ere ye know,
The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
Drops till it frets the very tingling hair,
So weighs it on our head, — and, for the earth,
Our common earth is tethered up and down,
Over and across — “ here shalt thou move,” they cry !

Lur. Ay, Husain ?

Hus. So have they spoiled all beside !
So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
Priests, graybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spies,
All in one tale, all singing the same song,
How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
With theirs — or, all is nothing — thou art lost —
A savage, how shouldst thou perceive as they ?
Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand !
Look up to it ! Why, down they pull thy neck,
Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst kiss,
Without their priests that needs must glove it first,
Lest peradventure flesh offend thy lip.
Love woman ! Why, a very beast thou art !
Thou must . . .

Lur. Peace, Husain !

Hus. Ay but, spoiling all,
For all, else true things, substituting false,
That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine !
Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
Thy battle-ardors, like a ball of fire,
And class them and allow them place and play
So far, no farther — unabashed the while !
Thou with the soul that never can take rest —
Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
And never to be still, — wouldst thou make war ?
Oh, that is commendable, just and right !
“Come over.” say they, “have the honor due
In living out thy nature ! Fight thy best :
It is to be for Florence, not thyself !
For thee, it were a horror and a plague ;
For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
How all is changed : the fire that fed on earth
Now towers to heaven !” —

Lur. And what sealed up so long
My Husain's mouth ?

Hus. Oh friend, oh lord — for me,
What am I ? — I was silent at thy side,
Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
Boils up, thou heart of me ! Now, live again,
Again love as thou likest, hate as free !
Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby !

Lur. So clear what Florence must expect of me ?

Hus. Both armies against Florence ! Take revenge !
Wide, deep — to live upon, in feeling now, —
And, after live, in memory, year by year —
And, with the dear conviction, die at last !
She lies now at thy pleasure : pleasure have !
Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,
And blends with life, to show it better by.
— How think'st thou ? — I have turned that light on them !
They called our thirst of war a transient thing ;
“The battle-element must pass away
From life,” they said, “and leave a tranquil world.”
— Master, I took their light and turned it full
On that dull turgid vein they said would burst
And pass away ; and as I looked on life,
Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid

And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
 Changed shape and hue yet ever was the same.
 Why, 't was all fighting, all their nobler life!
 All work was fighting, every harm — defeat,
 And every joy obtained — a victory!
 Be not their dupe!

— Their dupe? That hour is past!
 Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm!
 All is determined! Silence for me now!

[HUSAIN goes.]

Lur. Have I heard all?

Dom. [*advancing from the background.*] No, Luria, I remain!
 Not from the motives these have urged on thee,
 Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,
 And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay,
 As failing of sustainment from thyself,
 — Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,
 Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
 Shalt thou abolish Florence! I proclaim
 The angel in thee, and reject the sprites
 Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
 And mingle with his work and claim a share!
 Inconsciously to the augustest end
 Thou hast arisen: second not in rank
 So much as time, to him who first ordained
 That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.
 Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
 The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
 And made the eminences, each to each,
 Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
 Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their tops;
 So the few famous men of old combined,
 And let the multitude rise underneath,
 And reach them and unite — so Florence grew:
 Braccio speaks true, it was well worth the price.
 But when the sheltered many grew in pride
 And grudged the station of the elected ones,
 Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
 Only in voluntary servitude —
 Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
 Such plague possessed this Florence: who can tell
 The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
 Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
 She pulled down in her envy? Who as I,
 The light weak parasite born but to twine
 Round each of them and, measuring them, live?

My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
 My slender life proves what has passed away.
 I lived when they departed ; lived to cling
 To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou wouldst rise
 And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I knew.
 I have done nothing ; all was thy strong bole.
 But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
 Which after holds an aery in its arms,
 And 't was my care that nought should warp thy spire
 From rising to the height ; the roof is reached
 O' the forest, break through, see extend the sky !
 Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'T is man's cause !
 Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to dread :
 Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
 Encouragest her sin so much the more —
 And while the ignoble past is justified,
 Thou all the surelier warp'st the future growth,
 The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
 That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
 Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require,
 As o'er my prostrate House thyself wast reached !
 Man calls thee, God requites thee ! All is said,
 The mission of my House fulfilled at last :
 And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
 Reserves speech — it is now no woman's time.

[DOMIZIA goes.]

Lur. Thus at the last must figure Luria, then !
 Doing the various work of all his friends,
 And answering every purpose save his own.
 No doubt, 't is well for them to wish ; but him —
 After the exploit what were left ? Perchance
 A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
 At having brought successfully to bear
 'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms, —
 Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
 From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit.
 But after ! — once the easy vengeance willed,
 Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
 — (Not in her domes and towers and palaces,
 Not even in a dream, that outrage !) — low,
 As shamed in her own eyes henceforth forever,
 Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
 Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor !
 — For him, who did the irreparable wrong,
 What would be left, his life's illusion fled, —
 What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world ?

How strange that Florence should mistake me so !
Whence grew this ? What withdrew her faith from me ?
Some cause ! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother, — they are wronged, they say —
Notable wrongs her smile makes up again !
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their speech :
But what could it have been in word or deed
Thus injured me ? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps.
My fault, it must have been, — for, what gain they ?
Why risk the danger ? See, what I could do !
And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,
My Florentines ? The notable revenge,
I meditated ! To stay passively,
Attend their summons, be as they dispose !
Why, if my very soldiers keep the rank,
And if my chieftains acquiesce, what then ?
I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as find she must,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines
Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
At the glad outset ? Had they loved me less,
They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
And after all, who did the harm ? Not they !
How could they interpose with those old fools
I' the council ? Suffer for those old fools' sake —
They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
About my battles ? Ah, we Moors get blind
Out of our proper world, where we can see !
The sun that guides is closer to us ! There —
There, my own orb ! He sinks from out the sky !
Why, there ! a whole day has he blessed the land,
My land, our Florence all about the hills,
The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
All have been blest — and yet we Florentines,
With souls intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or set too late,
Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa much —
Therefore we wronged him ! Does he turn in ire
To burn the earth that cannot understand ?
Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
His task once ended ? Night wipes blame away.

Another morning from my East shall spring
 And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
 To watch and understand its work, no doubt.
 So, praise the new sun, the successor praise,
 Praise the new Luria and forget the old !

[*Taking a phial from his breast.*

— Strange ! This is all I brought from my own land
 To help me : Europe would supply the rest,
 All needs beside, all other helps save one !
 I thought of adverse fortune, battles lost,
 The natural upbraiding of the loser,
 And then this quiet remedy to seek
 At end of the disastrous day.

[*He drinks.*

'T is sought !

This was my happy triumph-morning : Florence
 Is saved : I drink this, and ere night, — die ! Strange !

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA and PUCCIO.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk this : well,
 Such were my projects for the city's good,
 To help her in attack or by defence.
 Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
 Our foresight by surprise through chance and change ;
 But not a little we provide against
 — If you see clear on every point.

Puc.

Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said — not much, if you count words,
 Yet to an understanding ear enough ;
 And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
 Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
 My elder in command, or threw a doubt
 Upon the very skill, it comforts me
 To know I leave, — your steady soldiership
 Which never failed me : yet, because it seemed
 A stranger's eye might haply note defect
 That skill, through use and custom, overlooks,
 I have gone into the old cares once more,
 As if I had to come and save again
 Florence — that May — that morning ! 'T is night now.
 Well — I broke off with ? . . .

Puc.

Of the past campaign

You spoke — of measures to be kept in mind
For future use.

Lur. True, so . . . but, time — no time!
As well end here: remember this, and me!
Farewell now!

Puc. Dare I speak?

Lur. South o' the river —
How is the second stream called . . . no, — the third?

Puc. Pesa.

Lur. And a stone's-cast from the fording-place,
To the east, — the little mount's name?

Puc. Lupo.

Lur. Ay!
Ay — there the tower, and all that side is safe!

With San Romano, west of Evola,
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
Five towers in all, — forget not!

Puc. Fear not me!

Lur. — Nor to memorialize the Council now,
I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim,
On the other side by Staggia on the hills,
Who kept the Sienese at check!

Puc. One word —
Sir, I must speak! That you submit yourself
To Florence' bidding, howsoever it prove,
And give up the command to me — is much,
Too much, perhaps: but what you tell me now,
Even will affect the other course you choose —
Poor as it may be, perils even that!
Refuge you seek at Pisa: yet these plans
All militate for Florence, all conclude
Your formidable work to make her queen
O' the country, — which her rivals rose against
When you began it, — which to interrupt,
Pisa would buy you off at any price!
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
With this made perfect and on record?

Lur. I —
At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say?

Puc. Where are you going, then? You must decide
On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night — you, stealing through our lines,
Who were this morning's Luria, — you escape
To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a past, as it had never been!
Where are you going?

Lur. Not so far, my Puccio,
But that I hope to hear, enjoy and praise
(If you mind praise from your old captain yet)
Each happy blow you strike for Florence!

Puc. Ay,
But ere you gain your shelter, what may come?
For see — though nothing's surely known as yet,
Still — truth must out — I apprehend the worst.
If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there's nothing can arrest the step
Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
Forgive her fifty times, it matters not!
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity?
You may do harm to her — why then, you will!
And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on?

Lur. One sure friend.

Puc. Potent?

Lur. All-potent.

Puc. And he is apprised?

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So! — Then I, put in your place,
Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labors mine, reaping their fruit,
To this, the State's gift, now add yours beside —
That I may take as my peculiar store
These your instructions to work Florence good.
And if, by putting some few happily
In practice, I should both advantage her
And draw down honor on myself, — what then?

Lur. Do it, my Puccio! I shall know and praise!

Puc. Though so, men say, "mark what we gain by change
— A Puccio for a Luria!"

Lur. Even so!

Puc. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences
Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post
Here at your feet, my captain and my lord!
That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
Ere a man settle, soul and body, down
Into his true place and take rest forever!
Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right hand,
And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
And all went wrong and painfully enough, —
No wonder, — till, the right spot stumbled on,

All the jar stops, and there is peace at once !
 I am yours now, — a tool your right hand wields !
 God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
 On orders, warrants, patents and the like,
 As if there were no glowing eye i' the world
 To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
 No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats !
 For, see — my doubt, where is it ? — fear ? 't is flown !
 And Florence and her anger are a tale
 To scare a child ! Why, half-a-dozen words
 Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
 Her error, my past folly — and all 's right,
 And you are Luria, our great chief again !
 Or at the worst — which worst were best of all —
 To exile or to death I follow you !

Lur. Thanks, Puccio ! Let me use the privilege
 You grant me : if I still command you, — stay !
 Remain here — my vicegerent, it shall be,
 And not successor : let me, as of old,
 Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours —
 Still triumph, one for both. There ! Leave me now !
 You cannot disobey my first command ?
 Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,
 And what you promised to concert with him !
 Send him to speak with me — nay, no farewell !
 You shall be by me when the sentence comes.

[PUCCIO goes.]

So, there 's one Florentine returns again !
 Out of the genial morning company,
 One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for your command, sir.

Lur.

What, so soon ?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.
 I used to notice you in early days
 As of the other species, so to speak,
 Those watchers of the lives of us who act —
 That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts.
 So, I propound this to your faculty
 As you would tell me, were a town to take
 . . . That is, of old. I am departing hence
 Under these imputations ; that is nought —
 I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
 Hardly a name behind me in the land,
 Being a stranger : all the more behoves
 That I regard how altered were the case

With natives of the country, Florentines
 On whom the like mischance should fall : the roots
 O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk —
 No root of mine will throb — you understand.
 But I had predecessors, Florentines,
 Accused as I am now, and punished so —
 The Traversari : you know more than I
 How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.
 Now Puccio, who succeeds me in command,
 Both served them and succeeded, in due time ;
 He knows the way, holds proper documents,
 And has the power to lay the simple truth
 Before an active spirit, as I count yours :
 And also there 's Tiburzio, my new friend,
 Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
 He being the great chivalric soul we know.
 I put it to your tact, sir — were 't not well,
 — A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more, —
 If you who witness, and have borne a share
 Involuntarily in my mischance,
 Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
 To indicate — that is, investigate
 The right or wrong of what mischance befell
 Those famous citizens, your countrymen ?
 Nay, you shall promise nothing : but reflect,
 And if your sense of justice prompt you — good !

Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
 To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine —
 Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied !
 For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
 My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
 I used to hold by the instructed brain,
 And move with Braccio as my master-mind ;
 The heart leads surelier : I must move with you —
 As greatest now, who ever were the best.
 So, let the last and humblest of your servants
 Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
 And tender homage by obeying you !

[*JACOPO goes.*]

Lur. Another ! — Luria goes not poorly forth.
 If we could wait ! The only fault 's with time ;
 All men become good creatures : but so slow !

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more ?

Dom. Domizia, whom you knew,
 Performed her task, and died with it. 'T is I,

Another woman, you have never known.
Let the past sleep now !

Lur. I have done with it.

Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows !
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content, —
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
With nought beyond to live for, — is that reached ? —
Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object ; — there 's another world !
See ! I have told the purpose of my life ;
'T is gained : you are decided, well or ill —
You march on Florence, or submit to her —
My work is done with you, your brow declares.
But — leave you ? — More of you seems yet to reach.
I stay for what I just begin to see.

Lur. So that you turn not to the past !

Dom. You trace
Nothing but ill in it — my selfish impulse,
Which sought its end and disregarded yours ?

Lur. Speak not against your nature : best, each keep
His own — you, yours — most, now that I keep mine,
— At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.
God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,
We would confound : the lesser has its use,
Which, when it apes the greater, is foregone.
I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine ;
But, punished properly, can end, a Moor.
Beside, there 's something makes me understand
Your nature : I have seen it.

Dom. Aught like mine ?

Lur. In my own East . . . if you would stoop and help
My barbarous illustration ! It sounds ill ;
Yet there 's no wrong at bottom : rather, praise.

Dom. Well ?

Lur. We have creatures there, which if you saw
The first time, you would doubtless marvel at
For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.
And though it were a lively moment's shock
Wherein you found the purpose of forked tongues
That seem innocuous in their lambent play,
Yet, once made known such grace requires such guard,
Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
In wisdom which made all things for the best —
So, take them, good with ill, contentedly,

The prominent beauty with the latent sting.
 I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines :
 Yet . . .

Dom. I am here to listen.

Lur. My own East !

How nearer God we were ! He glows above
 With scarce an intervention, presses close
 And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours !
 We feel him, nor by painful reason know !
 The everlasting minute of creation
 Is felt there ; now it is, as it was then ;
 All changes at his instantaneous will,
 Not by the operation of a law
 Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
 His hand is still engaged upon his world —
 Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
 For is not God all-mighty ? To recast
 The world, erase old things and make them new,
 What costs it him ? So, man breathes nobly there !
 And inasmuch as feeling, the East's gift,
 Is quick and transient — comes, and lo, is gone —
 While Northern thought is slow and durable,
 Surely a mission was reserved for me,
 Who, born with a perception of the power
 And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
 Should have remained and turned it to account,
 Giving thought's character and permanence
 To the too transitory feeling there —
 Writing God's message plain in mortal words.
 Instead of which, I leave my fated field
 For this where such a task is needed least,
 Where all are born consummate in the art
 I just perceive a chance of making mine, —
 And then, deserting thus my early post,
 I wonder that the men I come among
 Mistake me ! There, how all had understood,
 Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,
 Fresh instinct to translate them into law !
 Me, who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,
 More needful even : who have brought fresh stuff
 For us to mould, interpret and prove right, —
 New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know
 O' the instant, where had been our need of it ?
 — Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
 What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,

All, once revealed but taught us so long since
 That, having mere tradition of the fact, —
 Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
 The early traits all dropped away, — we said
 On sight of faith like yours, “So looks not faith
 We understand, described and praised before.”
 But still, the feat was dared; and though at first
 It suffered from our haste, yet trace by trace
 Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
 Our slow thought does its work, and all’s re-known.
 Oh noble Luria! What you have decreed
 I see not, but no animal revenge,
 No brute-like punishment of bad by worse —
 It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
 Traced for me by convention and mistake,
 Has gained that calm approving eye and brow!
 Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust
 To his own soul, and I will trust him mine!

Lur. In time!

Dom. How, Luria?

Lur. It is midnight now,
 And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step.

Lur. I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence!

Lur. As I knew

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him.

Aught else?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops
 Southward —

Lur. Toward Florence? Have out instantly . . .
 Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth.
 In — quick — ’t is nearly midnight! Bid him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Lur. Tiburzio? — not at Pisa?

Tib. I return
 From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must think
 By such procedure I have served her best.
 A people is but the attempt of many
 To rise to the completer life of one;
 And those who live as models for the mass
 Are singly of more value than they all.
 Such man are you, and such a time is this,
 That your sole fate concerns a nation more

Than its apparent welfare ; and to prove
 Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,
 Imports us far beyond the day's event,
 A battle's loss or gain : the mass remains, —
 Keep but the model safe, new men will rise
 To take its mould, and other days to prove
 How great a good was Luria's having lived.
 I might go try my fortune as you bade,
 And joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,
 Repair our harm — so were to-day's work done ;
 But where find Luria for our sons to see ?
 No, I look farther. I have testified
 (Declaring my submission to your arms)
 Her full success to Florence, making clear
 Your probity, as none else could : I spoke,
 And out it shone !

Lur. Ah — until Braccio spoke !

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole —
 His lapse to error, his return to knowledge :
 Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the head,
 I whom shame rests with ! Yet I dare look up,
 Sure of your pardon when I sue for it,
 Knowing you wholly. Let the midnight end !
 'Tis morn approaches ! Still you answer not ?
 Sunshine succeeds the shadow passed away ;
 Our faces, which phantasmal grew and false,
 Are all that felt it : they close round you, turn
 Themselves now in its complete vanishing.
 Speak, Luria ! Here begins your true career :
 Look up to it ! All now is possible,
 The glory and the grandeur of each dream.
 And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
 Save one — (nay, now your word must come at last)
 — That you would punish Florence !

Hus. [*pointing to LURIA's dead body.*] That is done.

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